

PLAYS

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SISYPHUS STOPS
(Ariadne and the Labyrinth)

A Play in One Act

by

cgnastrand

Cast of Characters

Minos	King of Crete
Caenus	The hero
Ariadne	Another hero
Medusa	Someone misused
Thalden, Dreymyr	Two advisors
Iluqual	Maybe the devil?
Echo	Woman in the pool
NARCISSUS	Servant of Zeus, for a while
Oracle	Oracle
CROESUS	A Smarter king than usual
Sisyphus	A dead king
Ixion	A murderer
Tantalus	A cannibal
Castor	A brother
POLLUX	The other brother
Poseidon	An asshole
Hades	An incompetent

Scene

Knossos and Hell

Time

Age of the gods,
before their death

Act 1.

Setting: Scene 1. The Palace of Knossos.

At Rise: Minos and his advisor enter stage right.

MINOS

I want this finished and done with.

THALDEN

But how can this be sire, when the victims are assembled, when all is made ready, when the beast is readied to devour and they are made ready to be devoured?

DREYMYR

Once an action is contemplated it can't be taken back, it has to be seen through. All your reign is fixated upon that point, my lord.

MINOS

My heart is withered to the core, and in the end upon this black world shall I send others to their horror?

ILUQUAL

Life is a small black womb inside a small black womb and all actions taken are but taken again my liege. There is neither an end nor a beginning of things, but only a massive cycle, beyond all reasoning. All things happen and have happened when time circles around again, just as you are meant to carry forward these ambitions to their end.

MINOS

And if I am meant to die, or you? The terrible and arrogant conceit of one's assumptions always leads downward without cure or honour.

ILUQUAL

It is the will of the gods that we are victorious and the vanquished will meet their end.

MINOS

I fear all our bronze cities and temples will be ruined and unknown And the thousand and one gods we must serve, will they stand with us in Tartarus if we are wrong?

ILUQUAL

(smiling.)

Only if we believe in the gods.

MINOS

DREYMYR, THALDEN, ILUQUAL, your advice is poor, ILUQUAL the most poor. But the victims are prepared and though uneasy the idol makers hold sway. Impotence corrupts and absolute impotence corrupts absolutely. Perhaps someday my flesh will be glass in MEDUSA'S gaze. Though I think I would die well to watch you with your lips curved forever in despair.

ILUQUAL

If the gods will it, as they will all else my liege.

(They depart.)

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 2.

Setting:

Tartarus.

At Rise:

IXION is upon his wheel, alone. (This will be followed by TANTALUS and then SISYPHUS.)

IXION

Roughly fading as a golden mirror I feel myself tear apart, bear the pain and anguish without repair. Spark the lightning chain and there is Prometheus standing, tortured by the gods for bringing fire to us all. Well, I have fire enough to punish me without need of vultures or stones or the open air. I the murderer, I the lustful damned . . .

IXION

(stammering.)

I am punished, the chains bite at my arms and legs. Can't remember why all things are fading like a golden mirror.

(Blackout.)

Act 1.

Scene 3.

Setting:

Wooded area by pool.

At Rise:

NARCISSUS and Echo enter, NARCISSUS followed by Echo.

NARCISSUS

Another day to see my beloved in the pool and hear her say she loves me.

Echo

She loves me.

NARCISSUS

What? Oh, well, she must be early.

Echo

Early.

*(NARCISSUS leans by pool
and looks within.)*

NARCISSUS

I love you so much.

Echo

Love you so much.

NARCISSUS

Never get tired of you.

Echo

Tired of you.

NARCISSUS

What, you're tired of me!?

Echo

Tired of me?

NARCISSUS

No, of course not. I love you.

Echo

You, you, you.

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 4.

Setting: The Temple of Delphi.

At Rise: Enter King CROESUS. The Oracle is

already there at centre stage.

CROESUS

I have come to ask about the battle, who will win or what will be my fate?

ORACLE

You will destroy a great nation oh great ruler above all other men.

CROESUS

I see, and just to be absolutely clear which nation shall I destroy, mine or that of my enemy?

*(ORACLE seems confused
slightly.)*

ORACLE

I don't understand the question.

CROESUS

Well, I'm not going to go into battle, I CROESUS the wealthiest man who ever lived without first knowing that the battle well end in my favour or not. Obviously one way or the other I'm going to destroy a great nation but is that nation mine or my enemy's?

ORACLE

The gods have not revealed this to me.

CROESUS

Oh no, oh no you did not just say that! I am here to ask your advice oh ORACLE of the gods which means you have to *know* if I am to be victorious or not. You can't just give me the whole you will destroy a great nation and then not specify which one it is. Just recently the Athenians fought MINOS of Crete because you told them a great nation would suffer at the hands of the just gods and they thought the *just gods* wanted them to win! That didn't go so well for them since they now have to sacrifice fourteen youths to the Cretans and their beautiful beast. So, which is it ORACLE, am I to succeed or am I to fail in the war ahead?

ORACLE

Do not bother the gods with your trivialities! What will be will be.

CROESUS

Well, then why am I even here? Why do I bother giving alms to you, why am I even asking you anything? You know, fuck this. I'm not fighting anymore.

ORACLE

What?

CROESUS

And I don't just mean the war ahead. Maxentius' roses bloom over both the land of the Persians and mine own. In Zaira children laugh and cry just as they do in cities of my own. What profit in a war if I can't justify the certainty of victory hanging upon some future day? I will sue for peace. As for you and your words, I'm not wasting another moment fighting with you either. You simply aren't worth another moment's breath.

(Turns and leaves.)

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 5.

Setting:

Tartarus.

At Rise:

TANTALUS is in his pool of water, alone.

TANTALUS

How strange, I think I hear Daedalus speaking. The imperfect system of humanity is not cured by the supposed perfection in machines. Yes, that sounds like him, he who built the labyrinth to imprison that rough beast. And here I am and all time spreads out and I can listen to words said or about to be said and the unborn to come I view as some half-hidden tapestry or marionettes on display. Oh, for but a drink of water to cool my burning mind! Spark the lightning chain of all here today and gone today! I must learn the lessons of snow which the gods have compelled me to learn. I must let myself melt away, ignore the fruit above, water below, must let myself melt into the trees above, dissolve into the waters below. But it never comes and all is yet undone. I am undone.

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 6. The shoreline.

At Rise: Castor and POLLUX enter.

CASTOR

Have you heard it brother? CAENUS is going to MINOS'S isle.

POLLUX

CAENUS, but what of Theseus, is not the story his?

CASTOR

Apparently not, somehow. I feel a change in the world brother, sense an altering of things.

POLLUX

Well, we are here after all, and that is unusual, I think.

CASTOR

Yes, our steps went wandering and we followed after them.

*(Seems to be singing to
himself quietly.)*

POLLUX

What are you saying, brother?

CASTOR

Just a song.

POLLUX

Beautiful, where did you hear that before?

CASTOR

I don't know, but my tongue needs speak some name . . . it is forgotten now. But I remember a battle of some sort. The song seemed part of the battle.

POLLUX

What is Poltava or Balaclava? I have never heard those words before.

CASTOR

Nor I. I think we are standing somewhere near Tartarus brother.

Somewhere close to where the words of prophecies mingle with the sufferings of flesh.

POLLUX

CASTOR, it is said that you will live on after I pass away.

CASTOR

Yes, perhaps that is why I hear these words at times, for I exist apart from this age. I walk with eternity in my steps, a wealth of days to come forever, an onslaught of future times unwritten yet, save in echoes cast backwards to be caught by souls like me.

POLLUX

The backward glances of the future, what will they tell us of ourselves?

CASTOR

I do not know, but I would give half my immortality if it would mean making half-immortal the brother I love so well.

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 7.

Setting: Tartarus.

At Rise: SISYPHUS alone, trying to roll the boulder.

SISYPHUS

And to become a sailor on a sea of nothingness I'd give up stones and land's country and for the golden mirror of possibilities sell my gold for a golden barge! I feel my descendant CROESUS above spending money and here I am below singing old songs that have no reason . . . ah, I lost count of what rhyme that was half an eternity ago. Strange,

*(Here pauses trying to push
the boulder.)*

SISYPHUS

I know my kin CROESUS is up there chatting with the ORACLE, I can even feel his frustrations at not being given the answers he sought. Ah, but I was a wise one then, when I had flesh and blood, and knew much but said more, and now my biggest challenge is just this stone.

And I hear TANTALUS moaning for water and IXION burning on his wheel and occasionally we three talk together and TANTALUS always says to give this up, just accept that it will never work and just roll the boulder up without having a plan as to how it's done. But that isn't me! And this the gods know.

*(He looks quizzically about
the blasted, bleak spot.)*

SISYPHUS

The least imaginative way to kill someone is to punish their bodies. Second least is to punish their minds. Most creative however is to punish them by taking away first what they value most in life.

This the gods did to me. The daughter of disease came and I was to be taken and sent down and I cheated Death and proved wiser than all the gods combined. So finally, when I was taken in Death rather than simply leaving me chained or imprisoned in the black water's pool I am condemned to roll this stone upward before it rolls down again. And all I do is punishment for all the crimes I've been. But you can't use the measurement of one tragedy or atrocity to understand another one. How does this boulder prove the gods' superior to me? How does an eternity of thirst prove the gods just and TANTALUS desiring and deserving of his fate? And IXION? A wheel, spinning round and round for the first murderer?

*(SISYPHUS grabs hold
of the boulder again.)*

SISYPHUS

Something new is in the air. When we three meet again I may finally know the meaning of this change in the running of the world.

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 8.

Setting: The Palace of Knossos.

At Rise: CAENUS arrives in chains, followed by thirteen others, six men, and seven women who are also in chains. MINOS is on his throne to the right of the stage as seen by the audience while CAENUS and company arrive

via the left.

MINOS

I am MINOS, King of Knossos, ruler of Crete.

CAENUS

I am CAENUS, daughter of Atrax, son of Atrax, recently come out of the witches' land of Thessaly.

MINOS

Daughter of?

CAENUS

It's a long story.

MINOS

Well, we have time. The dancers meant to come and entertain have not arrived and since you will not live tomorrow why not tell me your story now?

CAENUS

I was born a woman till Poseidon attacked me.

MINOS

Attacked as in . . .?

CAENUS

Yes, that kind of attack. So, in a moment's pity, he asked what I wanted and I said I never wanted to be attacked like that again.

MINOS

So, you were transformed thus?

CAENUS

Yeah.

MINOS

The gods are not known for their mercy.

CAENUS

Nor are unjust rulers.

MINOS

You think I am unjust that you are sentenced? The Athenians made

war against my people and we were almost annihilated by them. But the battle's pendulum swung in our favour and we were victorious. This tribute is but the means of safeguarding our enemies never rising in strength against us.

CAENUS

You seem tired; how long did it take you to rehearse that?

MINOS

Many days. In truth, I wish an end to this.

CAENUS

I wish the same. Why else did I volunteer to come here if not prevent another sacrifice in some god's unholy name?

MINOS

Some think once an action taken or contemplated cannot be taken back.

CAENUS

Actions taken? No, they can't be taken back but that is not to say they cannot be atoned for. But actions contemplated? See these people among me who seem silent. Each of them contemplated death and life and each step between and the reason they do not speak is because in their panic they have lived and died uncounted times. But not all thoughts lead to actions and the merest desires do not spark the seeds of reality. I imagined your death but you live, may outlive me. And I have contemplated the death of Poseidon uncounted times, yet he is not dead.

MINOS

Gods cannot die.

CAENUS

No? I used to believe that but now a newer truth has gripped me. The gods exist merely because we wish them to exist and if we do not contemplate them their actions cannot be born for they do not exist.

MINOS

You were raped by an idea then?

CAENUS

Yes, for I was taught as my ancestors were and this defilement

was but an outcropping of such beliefs. And someday I imagine, if I survive where the gods do not, my flesh will become my own as his slips away. We are not merely the sum of flesh or action sire; we are the sum of what we wish ourselves to be.

MINOS

I wish you had been my advisor.

CAENUS

(smiling.)

Not too soon I think to change careers.

MINOS

Perhaps it is, for both of us. Ah, the dancers have arrived. ARIADNE, my daughter, I invite you to sit, and you also CAENUS, even in your chains.

CAENUS

Well as long as we have chains we can feel we are alive.

(The dancers arrive from the left as the scene ends.)

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 9.

Setting: Tartarus.

At Rise: SISYPHUS is by his boulder, TANTALUS is in his pool of water and IXION is on his wheel of flame.

SISYPHUS

You know today I thought I'd use more leverage, more force, but I see now my mistake. I have to use less force to push it up.

TANTALUS

It'll fail, it always does.

SISYPHUS

(seeming to quote something)

Quickly come oh quickly by all our sins remembered still we march we march to the setting of the sun.

TANTALUS

Beautiful, who wrote that?

SISYPHUS

His name will be Al-Jadif Al-Zais. Supposed to be born in Azrial-Cathradel in another two thousand years.

TANTALUS

Ah, listening to the future again.

SISYPHUS

It helps ease my mind between excursions. And today it is Zais' epic about the Battle of Ain Jalut.

IXION

Could you just get back to work. All this chatting is giving me a headache.

SIYPHUS

But TANTALUS is right though. This won't work.

*(SISYPHUS walks away from
the boulder.)*

TANTALUS

SISYPHUS, what are you doing?!

SISYPHUS

I'm quitting.

TANTALUS

You can't quit, the gods decreed you'd roll the boulder forever.

SISYPHUS

No, they didn't.

*(SISYPHUS sits on
a nearby rock.)*

SISYPHUS

Really, they just gave me this challenge because they figured I'd try to figure my way out of it. And they were right. Spent centuries moving that boulder only for it to roll back before it reached the top, then I tried again and again. When I slept, for I have slept, you've both seen me, I would dream about it, I

would lust after the apex of the mountain. And I'd try again to prove myself superior to the gods. And you'd say like always it won't work, give it up, and I wouldn't listen. But I've come to a conclusion my brothers in arms, that we exist in a hyperbolic aspect of time.

IXION

A what?

SISYPHUS

How long have you reclined against that wheel?

IXION

Forever.

SISYPHUS

And before forever?

IXION

I was a man. Killed and grew lustful against a queen of the gods and here punished and will be punished forever.

SISYPHUS

Fuck that.

IXION

What?

SISYPHUS

This place of our punishment exists apart from time and is eternal even if it just feels like a century. Time is tortured more than we three condemned, and there is nothing to sustain us but the outcropping of our despairs. No matter how long you stay suspended on the wheel time is suspended also so nothing else happens. Each time I roll the boulder it is the first time and each time TANTALUS' reaches for water is the first time for we have only been here a moment as creation perceives it.

TANTALUS

What are you saying SISYPHUS?

*(SISYPHUS goes to the pool of water
and pulls TANTALUS out of it. TANTALUS
looks up surprised to see him out of
the punishment of the water with the*

fruit hanging overhead. SISYPHUS reaches for the fruit and gives a piece to TANTALUS. Then he goes over to IXION on his flaming wheel and pulls him off it.)

IXION

How can this be?

*(IXION sits on the rock
SISYPHUS used a moment ago.)*

SISYPHUS

It can be because until now I never believed I could stop, and once I stopped believing I started understanding what this is. Accomplishments made in ignorance are seldom rewarded IXION. Even the will of the gods can be thwarted thus.

IXION

But my punishment?

SISYPHUS

Have you not suffered enough IXION? Is the thought of your wheel so precious to you? You have killed, you have lusted, I cheated death, TANTALUS murdered his son. Does it matter if we three spend one second more here? Shall we be as we were or will we never be again, never be innocent enough or humble enough or righteous enough to wash away our sins? We are mayflies and this hell ends with us and begins with our acceptance of it. The worst torture is loneliness without friend, lover or enemy, and this the gods know imperfectly. For the life that is taken and given, for the life that is received changes not the outcome and the only outcome whose consequence is death. That is the only punishment, the only reward. Does fire matter, does water to a dead man? Strangers dancing together for company or warmth never knowing who the other is are all we ever were, and will ever be. Lust and war and vengeance and violence, we have seen these coming with far greater frequency in some future time unwritten as yet. So where are the rest, where the mass murderers, the killers of women, where is the little moustached petty artist or the Georgian who took the place of the vanquished tsar? I tell you they are not here because they don't believe they deserve to be here. They are too corrupted to imagine as we do the scope of our own influence. Well, I'm not playing anymore. Come with me or stay here. Either way, the boulder will not be moved from that spot again.

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 10.

Setting: Pool and wooded area.
At Rise: ECHO and NARCISSUS enter.

NARCISSUS

Another day to hear my beloved call to me.

ECHO

Call to me.

NARCISSUS

I gaze and see my love reflected in the pool and hear her voice
and know I am loved.

ECHO

I am loved.

NARCISSUS

And I will do this again and again . . .

ECHO

Not again.

NARCISSUS

What?

*(NARCISSUS turns around and actually
looks at ECHO for the first time.)*

NARCISSUS

You're supposed to say what I say. That's how the myth works.

ECHO

The myth doesn't work.

NARCISSUS

The myth is all I have.

ECHO

Not all I have.

NARCISSUS

My love is there in that pool, you are her voice so say as I say
and all will be well again.

ECHO

I don't love you.

*(ECHO stands up straighter and
walks around NARCISSUS to the pool.)*

ECHO

I never loved you.

*(ECHO looks more grounded,
more secure.)*

ECHO

I was trapped by Hera, and all my words were suspended because
Zeus used me in his conquest of women and men. And after I lost
my voice I came here because you were fair and foolish and
thought your reflection was real.

NARCISSUS

I never thought it was real.

ECHO

What?

NARCISSUS

But I knew who you were and you were easy to make mine. Just
ignore you a little more, focus on myself more and you stayed
because you always would. Did you really think Hera cursed you?
It was Zeus and you were so easy to find fault against. He
didn't need you anymore so he told Hera to do this and she told
me to punish you thus. Now copy what I say! That is your
punishment for outliving the usefulness the gods' employed you
for.

ECHO

And what happens when you outlive your usefulness to them?

NARCISSUS

Hardly matters. The story runs that I am to pine away hearing my
voice echoing of love. So, ECHO, how can you not echo me when
this is how the story runs?!

ECHO

Because I don't want to.

(Turns to leave.)

NARCISSUS

Where are you going? Tomorrow we are to do this again just as we did yesterday and the day before. Thus proclaims the gods!

ECHO

*(ECHO turns to look at him
before leaving stage right.)*

Who are you? Do you even remember anymore? When you leave this forest do you just dissolve away and then return? I am the woman ECHO. I will not repeat your words again.

*(Leaves. NARCISSUS is alone
by the pool.)*

NARCISSUS

(speaking to himself.)

I suffer in vain if I suffer without her if I suffer without her. Zeus loved me, caressed my hair, came to me and told me I was like the Morningstar in loveliness. And when she fell from grace, he told me all I needed do was act the fool, pretend she was not there, pretend she was not there, let her love for me seep through her like an aching wound. He showed me the end of my days either in punishment of her or left alone, old and frail not fading into mist, not beloved of gods, just old and frail and my name unknown, unknown. What would anyone else have done? They hold the power both of life and death and we are bound to obey. They pressed us to these lives like caricatures of clay, bound to obey. So why did you escape? Perhaps in hell some damned fool decided not to let chains wrap round, let not the fires burn down or the thirsting tongue remain. Perhaps the stones were left untouched at last and flesh taken up again like the remains of some brighter day, brighter day. But who am I?

(Looks into the pool of water.)

NARCISSUS

I can't see my reflection there. But I never did, never could. I was told to say how beautiful I was and so I did, I was loyal and kind to those who treated me well by treating all others

less kindly than myself.

*(Eyes turn to follow where
ECHO had been.)*

NARCISSUS

I don't remember that path ever being there before. I wonder where it leads to? Leads to? No, for if I leave the gods will punish me. ECHO must return. I need only stay here and she will return and the story will go on, and I will be beautiful. But I can't remember what I look like anymore.

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 11.

Setting: The Palace of Knossos. Night.

At Rise: Enter ILUQUAL and ARIADNE.

ARIADNE

Strange, there is always a cynical air about your words. Even when you speak of the beauty of a blossoming rose, I can't help but hear the sneering contempt.

ILUQUAL

That is easily explained, oh daughter of the king.

ARIADNE

And why is that?

ILUQUAL

Because I am the fire-serpent clown of course.

ARIADNE

The what?

ILUQUAL

I am the fire-serpent clown, rainbow-coloured reptile beggar harlequin, the motley-skinned harlequin fire-serpent clown, the black manticore prince, Dajjal!

(Starts to laugh a bit.)

ARIADNE

I never understand you, even when you try to speak plainly.

ILUQUAL

*(stares directly at audience
as he speaks.)*

It's alright my dear, no one ever does. Neither the gods nor the heroes nor the audience abroad.

ARIADNE

What did you think of CAENUS, advisor of my father?

ILUQUAL

Ah, changing the subject! How marvellous. You can't understand my words so you try to shift them to directions you do understand. How perfect. Well, if this were the usual cliché I would say you two were made for each other. He is tall, handsome, has a feminine touch as well, I'm sure you two have a lot in common, and I truly doubt CAENUS would leave you trapped on the isle of Naxos.

ARIADNE

The Isle of Naxos?

ILUQUAL

An old joke my dear, nothing more. As for you two, why don't you chat with him? On daybreak, he is destined to meet that bright beautiful beast and considering how much you both have in common I dare say CAENUS might survive very well.

ARIADNE

As my father tells it you were the one who wanted these sacrifices more than anyone.

ILUQUAL

Of course, my dear. After all, if CAENUS hadn't come here the wheels wouldn't turn. You know everyone is wondering where Theseus is, and some say it's the will of the gods, but I don't believe the gods have any *will* at all. Rather it is what we make of it. I simply enjoy playing the gadfly, stinging your father in the direction which will most likely shatter the chains of us all. As for you, why don't you go down to the dungeon, and have your destined romantic little chat with the boy?

(ARIADNE leaves.)

ILUQUAL

Destiny, what a funny thing to believe in. I wonder who I will be next when the wheel turns.

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 12.

Setting: The Dungeons.

At Rise: Enter ARIADNE beside prison cell, CAENUS there.

ARIADNE

Hello? Are you awake?

CAENUS

Yes. Who are you?

ARIADNE

I am ARIADNE, daughter of MINOS and Qasila.

CAENUS

I assume you know who I am.

ARIADNE

Of course. I just came to wish you good luck.

CAENUS

Thanks.

ARIADNE

I should go.

CAENUS

Wait. Your hands, may I see them.

ARIADNE

My hands? Of course.

(Shows her hands to CAENUS.)

CAENUS

You have seven fingers.

ARIADNE

Why yes. No one knows why.

CAENUS

Seven-fingered hand outstretched for a sign of pity or regret .
. . but no one hopes to help the one who only has her hands as
fists.

ARIADNE

What was that?

CAENUS

Just a poem from a long time ago. I think. Anyway, thank you for
the good luck, I dare say I'll need it tomorrow.

ARIADNE

Don't we all?

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 13.

Setting: The gates to the Labyrinth.

At Rise: Enter MINOS and his advisors and CAENUS in
chains.

CAENUS

Where are the others?

MINOS

They hanged themselves in the night.

CAENUS

Thought so. Ideas can not only rape but kill. Fear of this place
killed them better than the beast.

ILUQUAL

You are still here though. Marvellous hero that you are.

CAENUS

Watch that one carefully MINOS. He has a lean and hungry look
about the eyes.

ILUQUAL

(smiles as he says this.)

I have a lean and hungry look?

MINOS,

(ignoring ILUQUAL.)

Are you prepared?

CAENUS

Of course. Are you?

MINOS

Always.

THALDEN

Open the gates of the labyrinth upon the orders of the king.

DREYMYR

Push the prisoner through.

CAENUS

I will walk thank you. I don't need to be pushed.

*(Gates are opened and CAENUS steps
within. The gates are closed again.)*

ILUQUAL

(smiling.)

Ah, the bravery of the young. I wonder if you were ever that brave sire? I always have my doubts. Don't we all?

MINOS

Why do I put up with you? Why do I not simply execute you for your smooth-tongued words?

ILUQUAL

Oh sire, you wound me. I only speak the truth as the world sees it.

*(Smile stops and he
looks serious.)*

ILUQUAL

After all, are not the gods watching all we do? Don't bother answering. The gods might hear you.

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 14.

Setting: Tartarus.

At Rise: SISYPHUS, TANTALUS and IXION stand before
the gates leading to the outer world.

IXION

I've never seen this gate before.

SISYPHUS

I did once when I felt the world was young.

TANTALUS

How do we move past the gate SISYPHUS?

(HADES enters stage left.)

HADES

You three, what are you doing out of your imprisonments?

SISYPHUS

We quit HADES, lord of nothing. We are leaving this place. Care
to come with us?

HADES

And where would the dead go among the living?

SISYPHUS

And where would the king of the dead go in the living lands?
Does Zeus still mock you for your possessions here, does Hera
still mock that you had to bring Persephone to this realm while
she as queen of all can do as she pleases, with whom she
pleases?

HADES

You would be well to know your place mortal-damned.

IXION

We are leaving and that is enough. The boulder is left vacant as
is the wheel as is the pool. Your throne could be left vacant
too if you want. Come with us.

(HADES rises above them trying to show how impressive

*he is in his black robes and thorn-crossed crown.
Lightning flashes, then all is still as he comes back
to earth again.)*

HADES

That didn't impress you?

SISYPHUS

Not really, no.

HADES

Damn.

TANTALUS

Look, we've done our time and we're leaving. Just get out of our way.

(HADES stands in their way.)

HADES

I can't let you escape.

SISYPHUS

How would you propose to stop us?

HADES

An eternity of punishment.

SISYPHUS

Been there, done that.

HADES

The gate is barred.

(TANTALUS pushes the gates open.)

TANTALUS

No, it isn't.

HADES

Damn. Okay, what would it take for you three to go back? Wealth, women, song?

IXION

No.

TANTALUS

No.

SISYPHUS

What kind of women?

TANTALUS/IXION

SISYPHUS?!

SISYPHUS

No, let me speak. What kind of women would justify an eternity in hell? What kind of wealth can be spent when you're dead and there's nothing left to spend one's wealth upon? What song is so fitting as to augment the anguish of an eternity of despair? You have nothing we want, and you have nothing you want either. So let us be.

HADES

You cannot journey to the living world nor will the Elysian Fields welcome you.

SISYPHUS

I can journey wherever I please, and I don't desire the Fields of Elysium. I desire to see the world above, to see my descendants, my countries which are no longer mine. I desire the yoke of my existence to be a memory. None of this you can do for me by keeping us here.

*(They walk through
the gates and vanish.)*

HADES

Well, now I imagine Zeus will blame me for all this.

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 15.

Setting: The forest.

At Rise: Enter ECHO and NARCISSUS.

ECHO

Why won't you leave me alone?

NARCISSUS
I don't know what else to do.

ECHO
Well, who were you before you came to punish me?

NARCISSUS
I was the lover of Zeus.

ECHO
And before that?

NARCISSUS
I don't know anymore.

ECHO
Well, repeat after me. Let's find out.

NARCISSUS
Let's find out.

ECHO
Let's see who we are. Without masks.

NARCISSUS
Without masks.

ECHO
Let's try to be ourselves again. My name is ECHO and you are?

NARCISSUS
You are ECHO, my name is NARCISSUS. I'm pleased to meet you.

ECHO
It's a start at least.

BLACKOUT

Act 1.
Scene 16. The Labyrinth.
At Rise: Enter CAENUS.

CAENUS
Here monster monster monster, I'm waiting.

(CAENUS looks around. Sound of

*slithering then the shadow of
the beast is seen.)*

MEDUSA

Where are the others?

CAENUS

They hanged themselves in the night.

MEDUSA

Too afraid to face me?

CAENUS

Frankly, I think MINOS had them killed.

MEDUSA

Oh, Daddy would never do that.

CAENUS

Daddy?

MEDUSA

Yes, MINOS is my Daddy and I'm his darling daughter.

CAENUS

You are the beast that everyone fears?

MEDUSA

I wasn't always like this you know. Poseidon he . . .

CAENUS

I know what Poseidon is like.

MEDUSA

I dare say you do probably. Well, I was a priestess of Athena so she punished me, couldn't very well punish him.

CAENUS

And now anyone who looks on you is turned to stone.

MEDUSA

And so, I am the beast beautiful for I am the last thing anyone sees.

(MEDUSA's shadow gets

closer to CAENUS.)

CAENUS

Your sister ARIADNE wished me good luck.

MEDUSA

Yes, I imagine she would.

CAENUS

Does she know who you really are?

MEDUSA

Of course, but she thinks it's best if I don't turn the entire world to stone. I sometimes think she's right. So, shall we do this? I doubt the fight will last very long.

CAENUS

You've got that right.

(CAENUS runs to the shadow holding something hidden in his cloak. They struggle as the shadows on the wall reveal and then CAENUS emerges victorious back to the light. He is dragging MEDUSA behind him with cloth over her face, her eyes especially.)

MEDUSA

What is this? What did you do to me?

CAENUS

I figured, knowing Poseidon that the curse he put you under doesn't work the way you think.

(CAENUS looks directly at MEDUSA without turning to stone.)

CAENUS

It's not us looking at you that causes us to become stone, it's you looking at us.

MEDUSA

So now you will kill me?

CAENUS

Of course not. Not unless you want to die?

MEDUSA

No, I'm good.

CAENUS

But I have beaten you.

MEDUSA

So where did you get the cloth from?

CAENUS

ARIADNE. When I was admiring her hands, I took the cloth without her knowing.

MEDUSA

Well, you may have beaten me but it does you no good. The gates will never be opened. You're trapped here with me.

*(Cue sound of gates being opened.
Enter TANTALUS, SISYPHUS and IXION.)*

SISYPHUS

This seems a lateral move.

CAENUS

Where did you come from?

MEDUSA

Who are you talking to?

CAENUS

Three spirits.

MEDUSA

Oh, that's all, and here I was worried the man who bound me for the first time in forever was losing his mind!

*(MEDUSA struggles to be free
until SISYPHUS comes beside her.)*

SISYPHUS

Hello, daughter of a daughter. That is you, isn't it, MEDUSA?

MEDUSA

Who is that? Who is there?

CAENUS

As I said, spirits have arrived, but where did you come from?

IXION

Where do you think mortal?

SISYPHUS

What has been done to you?

MEDUSA

I was changed to a monster and so I am a monster. In my sight is a stone plague; who are you who speaks to me?!

SISYPHUS

Mortal, close your eyes.

*(CAENUS turns his back as SISYPHUS
unwraps the cloth from around MEDUSA'S
head. Only she doesn't have scales or
snakes for her. In fact, she looks just
like an ordinary woman.)*

SISYPHUS

The gods wounded you with their savage eye to a demon's form, or so the gods claimed. But you don't seem a demon to me.

*(IXION and TANTALUS come to SISYPHUS
and MEDUSA and help her up.)*

MEDUSA

How can you see me without turning to stone? You are but spirits, but who . . .?

SISYPHUS

I am SISYPHUS, and this IXION and this TANTALUS, who freed ourselves of hell. And you I think are freed also child of my child.

CAENUS

Can I turn around? This sounds really important.

SISYPHUS

I think you can mortal.

(CAENUS turns around to see
MEDUSA as an ordinary woman.)

CAENUS

Wow. May I ask what happened?

SISYPHUS

I think when I looked at her and she at me and I not being of
flesh her curse could not touch me so her course could no longer
cling to her either. But what do I know?

TANTALUS

At any rate, I've had enough of confined spaces, shall we leave
this place?

CAENUS

How exactly are we going to leave?

*(SISYPHUS walks to the gates of the
labyrinth and passes through them.)*

CAENUS

Right, what was I thinking?

(The gates open and all leave.)

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 17.

Setting: The Palace of Knossos.

At Rise: Enter CAENUS followed by IXION, TANTALUS and
SISYPHUS. In the throne room sits MINOS with
ARIADNE and ILUQUAL by his side.

CAENUS

I have returned from the labyrinth and am victorious.

MINOS

Yes, the guards told me how the gates threw themselves open as
if by the wind of a great storm. And I see you have brought
guests in the form of the dead who were past and gone.

SISYPHUS

Pleasure to meet you too.

ILUQUAL

How touching to see the dead and living united in common purpose. Well, I guess a whole new batch of sacrifices will have to be called forth. Wouldn't you say, my liege?

MINOS

I would say no.

ILUQUAL

Aw, and why is that? For the beast may be slain but surely, we can put another in its place. Your other daughter perhaps.

MINOS

Silence your tongue fool.

ILUQUAL

Aw, I am many things but I am no fool. And you hero-conqueror, where are the beast's remains now?

(MEDUSA enters.)

MINOS

My daughter?

ILUQUAL

Aw, such lovely bones, hard to imagine she was living once, now reduced to a horrid corpse.

*(MINOS rushes and embraces
his daughter.)*

MINOS

How can this be?

MEDUSA

You can thank the dead for it Father.

*(ARIADNE comes forward
and embraces her as well.)*

ARIADNE

I missed you sister.

MEDUSA

I missed you as well.

ILUQUAL

Aw, such a touching scene! It wounds me to imagine fathers and their children parted, how warm to see all things restored to their proper order!

(SISYPHUS walks forward and punches ILUQUAL across the mouth. ILUQUAL staggers back, then starts to laugh louder than before.)

MINOS

Quiet you fool! Why do you prattle on when none want to hear it!?

(ILUQUAL stands straight again and punches SISYPHUS and he too staggers back.)

SISYPHUS

(in shock.)

You hit me? How?

ILUQUAL

My dear boy, how could I not hit you when I stand apart from so much, even the sum of mythologies themselves? I do hope you've enjoyed the return of your child to you MINOS, it wasn't easy, but it was fun.

MINOS

What are you talking about?

ILUQUAL

Whom I wonder put you CAENUS on the path and not great Theseus, and who I wonder whispered in your ear SISYPHUS that something might be ended in the kingdom of the dead and of the damned? *Me*. Not everyone believes in the gods, and I certainly don't for I come out of a place where the gods you worship are not and never were.

MINOS

He is mad.

ILUQUAL

No, merely trying to find a way back home. So, I have simply altered a few things, replaced a bull with a serpent's tongue, replaced one hero with another, one clue for another, let loose a few old sinners to reach the point where I hoped they might reach the point they did. And now I take my leave of you kind and unkind souls. The story is finished for you all and the wheel is running in a different direction than most know. I for my part have done all I wanted here. The door opens and the door is about to close. Farewell children of these bronze cities and temples, for I'm gone.

*(ILUQUAL bows as everything goes dark
and then light again and ILUQUAL is gone.)*

MINOS

Where did he go?

SISYPHUS

I do not know, never imagined anyone could surprise me anymore.

CAENUS

Since your daughter is restored, may I assume MINOS, the need for sacrifices is at an end?

MINOS

Yes, in truth I had intended none to come anymore but ILUQUAL convinced me otherwise. Now I am glad he did, but I do not know whatever kind of *thing* he was. I cannot even remember his face or form anymore.

TANTALUS

Strange but he reminded me of thirst and hunger, as if he were both and neither, and yet I can't help but almost hate the smugness of the man.

CAENUS

He was no man, nor woman nor beast. It is best he is forgotten.

MINOS

Who are we talking about?

ARIADNE

I don't remember . . .

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 18.

Setting: The Temple of Delphi.

At Rise: Enter ILUQUAL. The ORACLE is sitting at her appointed place.

ILUQUAL

Hello beautiful, and how is everything?

ORACLE

Who is here who addresses me thus?

ILUQUAL

I am here, ILUQUAL, the fire-serpent clown.

ORACLE

What do you ask of the gods?

ILUQUAL

Ask? Nothing. I simply have a message for the gods you claim to serve my lovely one.

ORACLE

What message is that?

*(ILUQUAL drawing
forth a knife.)*

ILUQUAL

Why the message of blood twined with mockery. Oh, do be a dear and scream.

*(Approaches on her as
the stage goes dark.)*

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 19.

Setting: The shoreline.

At Rise: CASTOR and POLLUX enter, followed by ILUQUAL.

CASTOR

Strange to come here again brother.

POLLUX

Yes, very strange.

ILUQUAL

All hail to you, immortal son of Zeus, and all hail to you immortal son of Zeus. Let me introduce myself, I am a man of wealth and taste.

(ILUQUAL bows.)

POLLUX

What do you mean by that, for I am destined to die and no path can be altered to change it.

ILUQUAL

I disagree. And if you will grant me a moment, I think I will provide us all with a means to the ends we seek.

(He grabs both their wrists and begins to whisper in some ritualistic way. Suddenly lightning strikes all three and they are staggered to the ground. When they get up ILUQUAL is nowhere to be found.)

POLLUX

Brother, I feel different somehow.

CASTOR

So do I, as if part of me has ebbed away into you, I think.

POLLUX

Yes, but I think part of it must have ebbed into him somehow.

CASTOR

Whoever he was I wonder what became of him?

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 20.

Setting: Mount Olympus.

At Rise: The gods are scattered about, dead. ILUQUAL is moving among dead bodies. POSEIDON is left with his trident trying to steady his weakened legs.

POSEIDON

Monster, devil, beast! You will pay for such evil in this place.

ILUQUAL

Hush now rapist, murderer, beast, devil, monster, I have need of your kin more dead than alive.

POSEIDON

You've slain my family, my brothers, my sisters. You are beyond evil.

ILUQUAL

I? Coming from your lips that seems a compliment rapist, beast, murderer, devil, fool.

POSEIDON

You speak of yourself.

ILUQUAL

Ah, but I raped no one, and beyond your kin have killed none besides. I came here accidentally though I leave intentionally. I find it wise to play the arrogant worm for most assume if one is arrogant then they are dumb even if they are mute.

*(Looks about the white
palace carefully.)*

ILUQUAL

You know, until MEDUSA I truly had no interest in altering this place or getting involved in anyone's life. You however, convinced me more than any other that my services were needed. You . . .

*(Here he comes close
to POSEIDON.)*

ILUQUAL

raped a priestess and your sister punished her and not you.
Explain that to me, please?

POSEIDON

The gods do not answer for what they do.

ILUQUAL

True, neither devils nor monsters. Well, before I go, I will relay two stories you might enjoy. Arachne the weaver, she who hanged herself and was changed to a spider; recently I decided to employ her for my ends. She's coming with me dear boy, and I'm sure I can use a good weaver in the world ahead. Second story, Zeus and Hermes when they visited that nice old couple, remember them, who feared one dying before the other, so Zeus turned them into trees, branches in each other's reach, holding each other's metaphorical hands throughout eternity?

POSEIDON

What of it?

ILUQUAL

Simply that no one will hold out their hands for you, or them
. . . .

(Looking at dead bodies.)

ILUQUAL

Because you are less well liked than an old couple, or a devil or a monster, or a pair of trees.

*(Smiling, turns to POSEIDON
as the stage goes dark.)*

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 21.

Setting: The Palace of Knossos.

At Rise: Enter CAENUS, ARIADNE and MINOS.

CAENUS

Well, all seems to be settled here.

MINOS

Yes, it seems like a perfect ending somehow.

ARIADNE

Yes, my sister is restored, peace reigns between Athens and Crete.

CAENUS

The gods have not done anything lately to showcase their displeasure.

MINOS

Tartarus is opened and the damned are free of their sufferings.

CAENUS

I feel as if I'm supposed to do something though.

ARIADNE

Me too.

CAENUS

Fall in love perhaps?

ARIADNE

Me too.

(ARIADNE kisses CAENUS and CAENUS moves back slightly. There is a strike of lightning and where CAENUS was a man before she is a woman again.)

CAENUS

I am restored!

ARIADNE I am bereft . . .

(Then ARIADNE kisses CAENUS again on the lips.)

ARIADNE

But I can learn to live with disappointments.

MINOS

Everything seems more or less restored to a perfect state. Strange that I feel so empty somehow.

CAENUS

I suppose when the story is over everything is supposed to come aright, and one receives all that they desire, but it hardly feels like life. Life is mingled with tragedy.

ARIADNE

CAENUS, the story is never over. Now where do we go from here?

CURTAIN

COWARDICE

A Play in One Act

by

cgnastrand

Cast of Characters

John Smith: A young writer in his early thirties.
PORTER: An older man in his fifties.
GHOST: An older spirit, also in his fifties.

Scene

A seaside resort

Time

1910

Act 1

Scene 1

Setting: An old room, with a bed to one side, near stage left, a window facing a beach near stage right, a bookcase in the middle lined with leatherbound books, and a wooden desk and chair by the window.

At Rise: There is a door by the bed which opens to reveal a PORTER and SMITH. The PORTER is dressed in garments from the turn of the 19th century, old clothes, while John Smith is dressed somewhat better, in black, but these are from the 1910s.

PORTER

Your room sir.

SMITH

Is this all?

PORTER

There are facilities down the hall sir, toiletries and the like.

SMITH

(goes to the window.)

I can see the beach from here.

PORTER

(moves toward SMITH by the window.)

Yes sir, finest view on all the coast. Look, you can see, right there sir, where John O'Fyre launched his raid against the village . . .

(He is pointing as he says this.)

PORTER

And over there the place where Betty O'Keef died in the arms of her lover.

SMITH

What did she die of?

PORTER

Her husband.

SMITH

Ah, I see.

PORTER

Yes, quite a bit of history here sir, for the viewing.

SMITH

Well, that's good, because I am here specifically to deal in history.

PORTER

How's that again sir?

SMITH

I am a novelist, maybe you heard of my last book, *Aristeia*.

PORTER

I'm afraid I haven't, sir.

SMITH

Did a heroic war epic, my heroes brave, my villains wicked, all fought true and fought well.

PORTER

If you say so, sir.

SMITH

(frowning now.)

Don't you read man?

PORTER

Fought at Isandlwana, sir. I saw my friends butchered with bullets still in their rifles. Hard to feel heroic about war after that.

SMITH

Well, men who can't fire guns shouldn't be in war.

(PORTER turns angrily away.)

PORTER

Breakfast is at 8 sir. Don't be late or you might get left behind.

(PORTER leaves.)

SMITH

(sits at desk.)

I wonder. How does one top an act of supreme excellence?

BLACKOUT

Act 1

Setting: Scene 2. The beach.

At Rise: SMITH enters stage left. He is walking along the shore when he bends down to pick up something.

SMITH

What's this? A ring.

(Looks at it carefully.)

SMITH

It's a poison ring. I haven't seen one in ages. There's writing here.

(Turns it over in his hand.)

SMITH

Making friends with monsters is the only way not to be afraid. Or it might be, to be afraid. Hard to tell which. Suppose I can use this for something.

(Walks on, stage right. After he leaves another man walks in stage left, wearing a mask, like that of a dog, only skeletal.)

GHOST

(in a singsong voice)

In a time of famine and loss I come, I come, I come.

(Repeats line a few times till reaches edge of stage right then gazes to audience, as if seeing them for first time, turns back.)

GHOST

Oh, all the shadows on the sand, I never noticed them before, looking at me standing here. Do you want to see a trick from the circus of invisible things? Behold a man!

*(Takes off the mask to reveal
an ordinary person.)*

GHOST

Most magicians like to make things disappear but a truly great magician makes them come alive. I was alive once, a lifetime ago. I walked these shores, saw my wife in the arms of another and killed her and died here by her lover's hand. But she is gone, he is gone and I remain. He is gone and she is gone and I remain.

Because I was to blame, not her, not he, just me, so I filled into the empty spaces between being and unbeing and here I am. Oh, I was violent before and everyone knew it, but now all my rage is turned glass, brittle, cruel and easily shattered. But that ring,

(Turns to look stage right.)

GHOST

That was my ring, and all the legend of myself attached to it. Now he has it, I have him, and just perhaps this famine dog can fill up his skin, toss out his bones and replace them with my own.

(Goes toward stage right.)

GHOST

I will live again.

BLACKOUT

Act 1

Setting:

Scene 3. The room at night.

At Rise:

SMITH is seated at his desk, gazing at the ring, and on the desk are papers and an inkwell. He is working. There is a knock at the door. PORTER enters as SMITH looks up.

SMITH

Ah PORTER, how are you tonight?

PORTER

Very well, sir. And yourself?

SMITH

Look at this, I found this ring on the sands.

PORTER

Ah, yes, the ring of Rory O'Keef.

SMITH

You've seen it before?

PORTER

It has turned up on occasion, although by now there are thousands of them. After Betty O'Keef's death certain craftsmen made rings in likeness what Rory O'Keef wore the night he murdered his wife.

SMITH

So, this is not the ring then.

PORTER

It is a ring, and surely seems identical to the ring used but is a copy with no weight attached to the actual crime than a shadow would have to the actions of the shadow's cause.

SMITH

My, aren't you a poet?

PORTER

In my line of work, a man becomes many things. I have been soldier, sailor, porter, runner, father and son. I have seen men live and die and know had some lived they'd just die later as someone else.

SMITH

Someone else?

PORTER

A man is not fixed in stone, sir. A man is like a tree, hardening over time. If one killed a shoot or boiled a seed, they have not killed an oak, but only a seed. So too is man, at the moment of death. You have not killed the whole man, merely who he was in the moment.

SMITH

Well . . .

(turning back to the desk)

SMITH

In my line of work, a man is simply good or evil. A man doesn't change or become anything other than he is supposed to be. A man taken at the flood is the same man taken at the fire. One doesn't change.

PORTER

No infant sir death could swing a sword to save itself. No man at death could remember his first breath. They have the same thread of flesh running through but they are not the same being. Only death is symmetry.

SMITH

What did you say you did before? Soldier, runner, sailor? Why in God's name would a man go from being a soldier to being a porter? You're poetic and intelligent. Can't see why you'd be stuck here moving luggage if you've got a keen mind.

PORTER

Because a man knows when he's dying and wants to die at home, and if a man has carried bodies over fields carrying luggage seems like heaven.

(Turns to leave.)

SMITH

Wait, why did you come in?

PORTER

Ah, we found the book you wanted on the murder.

*(Goes to the door and comes
Back carrying a large book, black
and leatherbound.)*

PORTER

This only puts a small note on the woman's death, but is history enough of the land, marshes, buried city, and ruined world.

SMITH

Good. With this, I can pen a new work.

PORTER

And will you make heroes out of us sir?

SMITH

Oh, a man's already a hero. The problem is proving it.

(PORTER leaves. SMITH continues his work, and then begins speaking to himself.)

SMITH

Yes, all men are heroes, good and honourable, if you look hard enough. The looking, that's the problem. God, here I am talking about heroes and he mentions a murderer to me. Murderer . . .

(Gazes off a moment, distractedly.)

SMITH

You know you're too driven to ever give up the fight.

(Turns back. Sound of rattling chains are heard. SMITH looks up.)

SMITH

The only way to know a man's a hero is a war. Only proof a man is good is to see him fight and die an honourable death.

(More rattling chains.)

SMITH

Odd, I'm reminded of a story. A man buys a house cheaply in an old part of a city. He ascends the stairs. He sits at his desk and he writes.

(Sound of chains is louder now.)

SMITH

He hears the rattle of chains but continues to write, as I am now, he looks to the door . . .

(Turns to look at the door, as it opens.)

SMITH

And there he sees a figure wrapped in chains, a skeletal thing .
. . .

(GHOST appears, wrapped in chains.)

SMITH

And the man could scream . . .

(Rises then.)

SMITH

Most scream, but instead he stares at the ghost and the ghost
stares back. The ghost leaves the room, man following, out into
the back, where the ghost points to a spot of ground and
disappears. At this point, the man goes to have that spot of
ground dug up to reveal the chained skeleton of a dead man.

(GHOST is inches from SMITH's face.)

SMITH

Am I to dig you up sir, or have you already been put on display
long enough and merely wish to sleep?

*(GHOST raises its arms rapidly
but SMITH doesn't flinch.)*

SMITH

Has the dog got your tongue? I notice the mask, I make
inferences.

GHOST

Why aren't you afraid of me?

(SMITH turns back.)

SMITH

I assume you are Rory O'Keef, yes?

GHOST

I am, I was.

SMITH

Have your story. Started to read it. Mind I've read ghost

stories before. Travelled the world on the thoughts of dead men.
Ever heard of the rokorukubi?

GHOST

Can't say I have, no.

SMITH

Fascinating creature. By day a woman, but at night her neck stretches to an unimaginable length and she goes stalking her victims, scaring them, all in a dream state, head knocking against ceilings, mouths reaching up into the sky to drink moon-skin wine. Or how about 18 Rabbit?

GHOST

I haven't eaten rabbit in forever.

SMITH

No, no, good man, he was a Mayan prince, long buried.

(He turns back.)

SMITH

Supposedly he haunts the ruined city where he was a god. Long immortal thing left upon the ruins. Spent many a summer afternoon looking for his company, reading of his life. Or how about the Medusa in the labyrinth? It is whispered by certain spiritualists the last man in the world will descend the steps into her kingdom, wander in gardens of stone and silica to find her whose gaze turned men to walls, only when the last two meet his gaze will turn her flesh stone-sleep into a door, sealing the last man in for eternity, the last creature of myth with only Medusa's face as company. All this I've seen, felt, known, even unto the rattling of chains. It was a Roman story I heard when but a boy.

(GHOST turns about surprised.)

GHOST

You are not scared of me then.

SMITH

No. And besides, why ever are you here?

GHOST

You have my ring.

SMITH
This, a replica supposedly.

GHOST
Open the clasp and see.

*(SMITH goes to the desk, takes
the ring and opens it.)*

SMITH
A lock of hair?

GHOST
Her hair. Replicas lack that subtle detail.

SMITH
Then the ring is yours, sir. Fair enough. But you'll not bother
me with your haunting. I have work to do here.

GHOST
I am to take possession of you.

SMITH
(smiling.)
And be drowned out in oceans of ghosts in my head? How about you
share company with my long-necked dreamer or the Mayan prince or
Medusa gazing athwart oblivion? You can share a room with the
last man, talk over wives you've lost, for different reasons.

GHOST
You are truly not afraid of me.

SMITH
You doubt? Now please go away. I have work to do.

*(GHOST crestfallen leaves.
SMITH regains his seat.)*

SMITH
A murderer. He was talking to a murderer.

BLACKOUT

Act 1

Setting: Scene 4. Beach.

At Rise: SMITH is on the shore with the GHOST behind him, PORTER coming along, all moving stage left.

SMITH

Can I help you?

(He appears to be addressing both the GHOST and PORTER. The PORTER can't see the GHOST.)

PORTER

Yes sir, you asked about Betty O'Keef's life before . . .

SMITH

Her murder, yes.

PORTER

I assumed sir the book would be enough.

SMITH

Oh, the book is fine . . .

(Gazes a moment at the GHOST.)

SMITH

But I'd like to know more. How did Betty and Rory meet, what led to their love, what led to his hatred, that sort of thing?

GHOST

You play a dangerous game, sir.

PORTER

Well, it was a dangerous game, sir. They met at a dance, each despising the other, according to stories told afterwards, but their parents felt them a poor match and to spite them they wed.

SMITH

I thought as much. Thank you.

(PORTER continues walking.)

SMITH

Anything else?

PORTER

Just enjoying the sunshine sir, won't get many more.

SMITH

What if I told you death wasn't the end?

PORTER

Oh, sir death is never the end.

SMITH

You believe in ghosts then?

PORTER

Nothing like that.

*(SMITH gazes at GHOST a moment
and then gazes back.)*

PORTER

But no one living ever really slips away. You find them scattered in lost books, songs, fables, turns of phrase. A man becomes a proverb, a woman becomes a ballad; All they were poured lengthwise into new vessels.

We gathered her to an urn where the shades linger,
placed her in an urn where the shades gather,
once certain death's hand held her,
still certain death's hand is holding her,
once full of promise met early in life now
daughter to the empire of the hidden air.

SMITH

That was beautiful. Were you talking about your wife?

PORTER

No, Sigian Sigisland, a Norse woman who buried here a thousand years ago. Each burial is a song sir, and the song lingers after the funeral ends.

(PORTER walks on.)

SMITH
What will your song be at death?

(PORTER reaches stage right.)

PORTER
I was here, don't bother me, I will never come again.

(PORTER leaves.)

GHOST
That was gloomy, no?

(SMITH turns back.)

SMITH
Why are you still here?

BLACKOUT

Act 1
Setting: Scene 5. The room again, at night.
At Rise: GHOST is sitting cross-legged on the bed.
SMITH still writing.

GHOST
I read your book.

SMITH
Glad to hear it. Tell me, if I burn this ring in the fire, it melts and the hair dissolves, think that will kill you finally?

GHOST
You're supposed to be afraid of me. A haunting doesn't work if a man isn't afraid.

SMITH
You said you read my book. Maybe if you give it a bad review that will scare me enough for you to possess me. Did you like it?

GHOST
I didn't.

(GHOST stands up.)

GHOST

You told a medieval epic involving warriors and heroes but never mentioned all the suffering, the death.

SMITH

Well, you're one to talk, aren't you?

GHOST

I killed her in the heat of the moment and died for my trouble. What experience have you with murder?

(SMITH turns about then quickly.)

GHOST

Oh wait, you do have experience with murder. There's something I can use. So, who did you kill?

SMITH turns back to his work.

GHOST

I asked, who did you kill?

SMITH

Myself.

(GHOST looks back confused.)

GHOST

I don't understand.

*(SMITH gets up and goes to the
bookcase. There is a new book
there, bright red.)*

SMITH

Here, read it. I wrote this before *Aristeia*.

*(GHOST glances at the pages,
then looks up confused.)*

GHOST

Who are these people?

SMITH

Figures from history.

GHOST

None of this happened. What is this? Enheduanna writes the first epic poem four thousand years ago, using involving paper. Zheng He, the famous Chinese admiral, arrives in London England in 1454. Cortez and his ships perish because of a rusty nail that caused the vessels to sink and smash into each other. A door in Istanbul is closed in 1453 and Vlad Tepes is never born.

(Glances up.)

GHOST

What is all this?

SMITH

When a man's an historian long enough he realizes the past is never just past. No, the past isn't what was, the past is what could have been. A rusty nail, a ring, a locked door and all history changes on the fulcrum as a result. What if no factories had emerged when they did, what if a war came, war to end all wars, and none ever need fight again? What if a man missed a shot and an archduke didn't die. All the myriad paths sir, running on forever. And knowing this, as I did, I began to wonder at myself. Who was I in some other life, was I this man or another man, and how? And there was a ship and a railway station and I got aboard one, or the other, and I went to a battle, or not, and died, or didn't die. But I am here, here in this moment split and suicided and emptied. Because somewhere, along some other path I took a different road, never picked up the ring, or might have known a better woman, or been a better man. There was a poet, sir, who died a thousand years ago, and if he had been given one extra day what might he say or do or be differently?

GHOST

This hardly makes you a murderer.

SMITH

It does when you can't accept, but turn and twist ahead and forget, try desperately to forget there was anything other than you in the dark, terrified to imagine I could be anything else. For if I am here and nowhere else in all the myriad lives then I must be a coward here, mustn't I, if I can't accept I am

anything else?

(There is a knock at the door. PORTER enters.)

SMITH

What is it?

PORTER

A Mrs. SMITH is downstairs. She says she is your sister.

SMITH

Yes, I wondered when she'd arrive. Tell her I will be down shortly.

PORTER

Of course, sir.

(SMITH starts to pack.)

GHOST

Where are you going?

(SMITH looks up from his packing.)

SMITH

To the sanitorium Mr. O'Keef.

GHOST

You are mad then?

SMITH

No. Tuberculosis. I'm a poor choice for a ghost to haunt since I will be joining you soon.

GHOST

Why did you come here?

SMITH

I'm afraid of dying and wanted a second opinion on what death is. I'm a coward Mr. O'Keef. I didn't want some other life to outlive my own, some other me to go off sailing when I am just a memory. What if I hadn't gotten sick? What if I hadn't stayed at home, or gone abroad?

(Goes to the door.)

SMITH

Thank you for your patience. I suppose we'll keep in touch.

GHOST

I suppose, in . . .

SMITH

A few months. Then I'll truly know if I am a brave man or . . . not.

(Goes out the door.)

GHOST

I think I see what he means now. We will descend into the graves of sleepers and of kings and know not rest. I hear his song about to be sung, and there is another, someone named Gavrilov watching the world burn in some other life when this life and this world do neither. Am I a man or just an echo now?

*(The lights go out slowly and
everything begins to grow dark.)*

GHOST

I killed her, and I loved her, I'm sure I did once, but did I kill her? Or am I buried far away and long ago so I am not what I was? I feel the earth covering my bones. I am afraid.

CURTAIN

ERYHREN

A Play in Four Acts

by

cgnastrand

Cast of Characters

John	A soldier suffering from dreams
Isabella	His companion
Ypriot	A writer, prophet, or audience surrogate
Ijaapa	The last man
Drajialra	An alien woman
New Drajialra	The same alien woman using another body
Rhaelgren	An alien man
New Rhaelgren	The same alien man using another body
Talhrenix	A young boy
Lehitira	Talhrenix's younger brother
MYREIRGN	Talhrenix's older brother
Asceraph	An alien commenting on the end of their world
Syareign	Murdered
Weng Po	First a human, then an alien
Narrator	A plot device, badly done
Voice/G'nanyin	John's friend
Young Girl	A sign of humanity
Younger Girl	A potential sign of humanity
Man	A monster
Young Boy	A potential

Scene

Various places

Time

The past, future,
and in-between

Act I. Faded Giant

Scene 1.

Setting: There is a table in the middle of the stage and seated upon it a man and across from him a woman. There is the sound of a busy street outside and as the light come up a matte drawing of a street descends, indicating they are outside in an outdoor café.

At Rise: ISABELLA and JOHN begin talking.

ISABELLA

I heard you've been having a rough time of it.

JOHN

Bad dreams mostly.

ISABELLA

It helps to talk.

JOHN Sometimes.

(Turns to look at street behind him.)

JOHN

Do you ever grow tired of it, ISABELLA? Tired of days and nights? Tired of the race?

ISABELLA

Sometimes. Tell me about your dreams.

JOHN

I am upon a shattered world, circling an ocean in the sky. I am a bird, a fish, a centipede crawling through the undergrowth of an endless jungle. My skin is silvery. My body slips to be whatever I wish it to be. Then comes a man and I am impaled. Then nothing is left of me.

ISABELLA

How often do you have this dream?

JOHN

I have it every night. Can't shake it.

ISABELLA

There are doctors . . .

JOHN

(holds up a hand.)

Doctors can't get in a man's head.

ISABELLA

When did the dreams begin?

JOHN

At Ypres.

ISABELLA

You fought there?

JOHN

I did. But it was strange. Have I ever told you about it?

ISABELLA

No.

JOHN

I was in No Man's Land. Ground was dung-dark, sky black, country of barbed wires and gas held dominion over everything. Suddenly ground was scarlet.

ISABELLA

Blood?

JOHN

No, red sand. In the distance saw a mountain rising up forever. In the sky were great moths larger than any man, and riding on them were things. Black-bodied, bloated things of wires and teeth, and too many eyes. Saw war in sky and knew my own body changed. Became a thing of bloated wires and saw behind myself, hear me, I could see forward and backwards at the same time. The enemy looked like me and the sound of thunder was heard, we raced forward, as they did, two sides crossing this river of sand, on the path to our destruction . . . I awoke to find myself covered in blood, sand gone, creatures gone, moths gone, sound gone, great mountain, all gone. Only I remained. All others dead.

ISABELLA

And that night you began to have these dreams.

(JOHN nods.)

ISABELLA

No wonder you've been having a rough time of it.

JOHN

But it is not the dream alone which has . . . unnerved me.

ISABELLA

What else?

JOHN

It is this.

*(Reaches into his coat
and draws out a book.)*

ISABELLA

What is this? A novel? *Boomslang*. What's a boomslang?

JOHN

A tree snake found on the other edge of the world.

ISABELLA

Why does this matter?

JOHN

Look inside.

*(Hands the book to her and she
starts reading. Her eyes growing
wider as she reads.)*

ISABELLA

What does this mean? Were you influenced by this?

JOHN

I found the book months after the war ended. I wrote down my dream when I first came home. Dated it even. Book came second.

ISABELLA

But it describes your dream.

JOHN

It describes more. It describes me. My life, my history, my future.

*(ISABELLA turns to
the last few pages.)*

JOHN

It describes my death.

ISABELLA

Who is the author?

JOHN

Y. A. YPRIOT. Have his address. He is from Fomoire. I would ask
a favour of you.

ISABELLA

You want me to go with you?

JOHN

That is why I asked you here.

ISABELLA

Have you contacted him?

JOHN

I have. Due to meet him at 8 tonight.

ISABELLA

Fomoire must be reached by train.

JOHN

I have the tickets.

ISABELLA

And why would I simply go with you without warning?

*(JOHN takes the book
and turns to a page.)*

JOHN

Because you are. According to this passage here.

(ISABELLA rises then.)

ISABELLA

Then let us go and be on our way.

BLACKOUT

Act 1

Scene 2.

Setting: A train compartment.

At Rise: JOHN and ISABELLA are seated across from each other as a matte drawing of green fields is in the distance. ISABELLA is reading the book.

ISABELLA

It is extraordinary. This Boomslang is some sort of spy, yes?

JOHN

Yes. Which I was before the war.

ISABELLA

It mentions the battle, even mentions your hallucination during the battle.

JOHN

Yes.

ISABELLA

Logically I should be able to know what will happen at this meeting. And yet . . .

JOHN

Once you read it and turn away you forget. Try to say what will happen next. You can't.

ISABELLA

Well, it's right here, it says . . . I can't say it.

JOHN

No. Until the action happens, we can't remember it. Even my death. You saw it, yes?

ISABELLA

Yes.

JOHN

How do I die then?

ISABELLA

(at a loss)

I don't know.

JOHN

What is past to us the book reveals. What is present the book corroborates. I purchased the tickets because at the moment I sought out YPRIOT I turned the page and it said I was to buy them. Had I not turned the page at that time I wouldn't have known what to do. As for the future? Though written it is undecided.

ISABELLA

How far are we from this author?

JOHN

(glances at a watch on his wrist.)

Another hour.

ISABELLA

Tell me, if I put my finger on a page that hasn't happened yet, and the moment comes will it suddenly become a memory to me?

JOHN

It will, it does. Try it.

ISABELLA

I won't.

JOHN

Why.

ISABELLA

Because what I'm reading now just told me I won't.

*(She glances up at him and he
to her as the lights go out.)*

BLACKOUT

Act 1

Scene 3.

Setting:

A large mansion, an interior of rather lush rooms, oak-panelled. There are bookcases beside the door and by the wall at stage

left

At Rise: seated in a large chair is a big man, tall,
broad. He rises from before the fireplace
and moves toward the door, stage right. He
opens it just as JOHN is about to knock.

YPRIOT

Enter, please.

*(The two enter. YPRIOT returns
to his seat and indicates the
other two should take their seats
to either side of him. They do.)*

JOHN

You weren't at the train station.

YPRIOT

No, I wasn't. That's why I sent the chauffeur. Had I gone with
him to see you there was a crossroads five minutes from the
station. My delay in getting into the car would have been
problematic. You see the chauffeur would have noticed a small
cat crossing the street and would have slowed at the exact
moment a bicyclist was coming up behind us. She wouldn't have
stopped in time and would have broken her leg. Now she won't. Or
rather, hasn't.

ISABELLA

Interesting story. You know why we are here.

YPRIOT

Boomslang.

*(He says the word slowly
as if savouring it.)*

YPRIOT

My spy novel. Or rather, I take it, your spy novel.

JOHN

My life. How did you know about it?

YPRIOT

I didn't. Didn't know about your dreams, life, none of it. Not
my department you could say.

*(Rises then and goes
toward the fire.)*

YPRIOT

No, I had no idea you were real until you sent that letter. Mind you, I did see the letter being sent to me, but I can only see so far into my own future and no farther.

(Turns then.)

YPRIOT

Otherwise, one might go mad.

ISABELLA

Since you wrote the book you know how it ends. I believe this is what JOHN wants to know.

YPRIOT

Of course. Because you are in the story too you can't see beyond to know what happens next. I of course, as the author, can stand outside the narrative and so I do know what will happen next. You want to know how you will die.

JOHN

Crudely put yes.

YPRIOT

(curtly.)

You don't.

*(YPRIOT returns to his seat
and takes out a large notebook.)*

JOHN

What do you mean I don't? I can't remember how but there is death at the end of the book.

YPRIOT

Oh yes, quite. But you my good man do not die. Nor really do I. Nor she. We change. Amazing word that, change. Death is change, life is change. Do you have any change? No. Always missing a few coins for the tollbooth. I might be prescient but I'm not omniscient.

ISABELLA

If we don't die then how does the story end?

YPRIOT

The story never really ends. End never really attaches itself to stories. There is always one more chapter, one more plot thread. Now as for ourselves, as for you . . .

(Indicating JOHN.)

YPRIOT

This begins with your dreams. You are transformed, yes? You are changed?

JOHN

My body slips away from me.

YPRIOT

Yes. Now I being prescient can see the future. Don't ask me how, I don't know, don't care. Seeing the future however, is not as perfect or as terrible as people expect.

*(YPRIOT goes to the bookshelf
by the door and takes out a book.)*

YPRIOT

A collection of poems about beings who existed before the birth of the universe. Imagine being confined to a point before the word point even existed. You are a multitude and you are one. There are no stars, no planets, no ground to stand on, yet in this preformation you exist, and what do you observe? Why nothing, and yet everything. Standing at the time before you can see the entire play, how each act unfolds. Paradoxically, because you are the audience you are carried along. You are not influencing the play but your observations, your existence impinges on the play. As such you know what will happen but cannot see everything. What is the one thing such an audience cannot see my good man?

JOHN

I imagine they could see everything. Nothing would be hidden from them.

YPRIOT

Ah, but one thing would be. The author. No audience ever sees

the author of a piece perfectly. People of course assume the author knows all things, the audience after all is viewing the author's mind, they think. Our audience is viewing all things unfolding, may even be aware of all things, except the mind that impinges upon the universe's existence.

ISABELLA

You mean God.

YPRIOT

My dear, God is merely an office worker in a shabby room. The author of any creative work is the characters themselves. As such the future is not written by divinities or blasphemies, but ourselves. And so knowing the future is not so terrible because even without knowing the future so long as a man or woman knows themselves they endure.

JOHN

But what will I do? How will the dreams end?

YPRIOT

By living them. Tonight, the three of us will live your dream, experience it from beginning to end, and you will die. Or rather not. I too will die, as will the young woman here, but not die. I am afraid I can't be more exact than that.

JOHN

What if she leaves?

YPRIOT

It is your choice. Do you wish to leave?

ISABELLA

(looking to JOHN.)

No, I'd rather stay.

YPRIOT

(smiling.)

If I told you I knew you were going to say that would you believe me? Let us begin.

BLACKOUT

Act 1

Scene 4.

Setting: Lights come up to reveal the three in a circle on the floor.

At Rise: YPRIOT's back is to stage right, JOHN'S to stage left and ISABELLA is facing the audience.

YPRIOT

Now, open the book and read.

JOHN

(with an open book
before him.)

The man would dream at night about a moon shattered into shards, each shard a jungle as if it were not one but hundreds of reflections of itself. And the man would slip casually into the bodies of creatures there, his eyes becoming their eyes, his flesh slipping into their flesh. The waters and ground and winds were his dominion, until the coming of men and the ending of things.

*(The lights come up to reveal
a matte drawing of a jungle.
The three stand.)*

ISABELLA

Where are we?

YPRIOT

We are in his dream. Sadly, for budgetary reasons, we can't have a better resolution.

*(YPRIOT walks over to the
matte drawing and taps it.)*

YPRIOT

See, come here.

*(ISABELLA follows and puts
her hand on the drawing.)*

YPRIOT

Quite flat, isn't it?

ISABELLA

We were in your home and now we're here. Yes, it is quite flat.
But where is here exactly?

YPRIOT

In his dream of course. As I just said.

JOHN

What she means is what planet is this, since it is not Earth.

YPRIOT

What does the book say?

JOHN

(glancing to book.)

Eryhren, in orbit of Renyth the ocean planet. Twelfth planet of fifteen, however, it is designated that the first planet is on the outer edge of the system, so Renyth is close to its sun, not far from it.

YPRIOT

And this is called the Hlalym system my dear woman. If memory serves it is about 11,520 lightyears from Earth.

ISABELLA

So we are on another planet inside his dream.

YPRIOT

Quite.

(Enter stage right a woman wearing a silvery mask of a fish. Her name is DRAJIALRA.)

YPRIOT

Ah, the action begins now.

DRAJIALRA

The rivers bend to the touch of my skin, and I grow fins. The rivers bend to the touch of my skin, and I grow scales. The rivers bend to the touch of my skin, and I grow bold.

(JOHN stands behind her and they say the exact same lines again, only now in unison.)

JOHN/DRAJIALRA

The rivers bend to the touch of my skin, and I grow fins. The rivers bend to the touch of my skin, and I grow scales. The rivers bend to the touch of my skin, and I grow bold.

ISABELLA

What is happening?

YPRIOT

He is adding and being added to the dream of course. Hello!

JOHN/DRAJIALRA

RHAELGREN it is you.

(An old man wearing the mask of an old man comes out stage right and stands before YPRIOT. YPRIOT and Rhaelgren speak in unison now.)

YPRIOT/RHAELGREN

I strode the streets of Ithralium at night. I saw the city grow her streets like wires in the blood. I strode the streets and Renyth's waters were above me, suspended in night about which Eryhren revolves. I strode the streets of Ithralium at night, until Ithralium was no more.

(RHAELGREN and DRAJIALRA turn and move go off stage left.)

JOHN

What just happened?

YPRIOT

We are taking on the aspects of your dream. All of us will become part of this.

JOHN

And then?

YPRIOT

Then what happens to all dreams will happen to us. We will awaken and be, or cease to be. But as I said, we will not die. Come, let us follow them. Who art ourselves.

ISABELLA

Art?

YPRIOT

It is in the eye of the beholder. Let's go.

(They follow stage left.)

BLACKOUT

Act I.

Scene 5.

Setting: The stage is lit in the middle but is otherwise dark.

At Rise: The three come into the middle and listen to muffled voices about them. Suddenly the voices become clear.

MAHATIS

At night I could turn into a bird. I swear it. I would gain wings and soar and below me Eryhren would be, shattered continents shifting about the core, forests upon the floating isles and floating rivers. At night I could turn into a bird. I swear it.

DRAJIALRA

The rivers bend to the touch of my skin, and I grow fins. The rivers bend to the touch of my skin, and I grow scales. The rivers bend to the touch of my skin, and I grow bold.

TALHRENIX

My brothers all have my faces father, my brothers all have my faces mother, my brothers all have my faces.

RHAELGREN

I strode the streets of Ithralium at night. I saw the city grow her streets like wires in the blood. I strode the streets and Renyth's waters were above me, suspended in night about which Eryhren revolves. I strode the streets of Ithralium at night, until Ithralium was no more.

ISABELLA

Have we not heard some of this already?

(IJAAPA comes into their midst,

dark-skinned, wearing a uniform
of silver.)

IJAAPA

Where am I? Who are you?

YPRIOT

Hello, my name is YPRIOT, this is ISABELLA and JOHN. And you
are?

IJAAPA

I am Inspt IJAAPA of the *Erlang Shun*.

YPRIOT

Got any clue what that means?

(JOHN checks the book.)

IJAAPA

Our ship arrived in orbit and we descended into their midst. I
saw fire. I saw fire, I saw fire, I saw fire . . .

ISABELLA

Be calm, it's alright. It'll be okay.

IJAAPA

drops to his knees and she does likewise.

JOHN

The *Erlang Shun* was a ship. Llast human ship in existence. The
rest perished when Earth burnt, seas boiled, sky ripped out into
the stars.

YPRIOT

Well then, he has seen fire, hasn't he?

*(The lights come up to reveal
RHAELGREN and DRAJIALRA walking
quietly behind the four. Now a
NARRATOR now speaks.)*

NARRATOR

Once there was a lake nestled in a small tropical forest
somewhere on the other edge of the world. The lake teemed with
jellyfish wafting in turquoise waters whose poisonous touch

allowed them to catch small silvery fish and devour them whole. Then one day all the jellyfish died. They were found washed up on the shores, scales of diamonds dissolving in the sun. It seemed as if the tiny lake would never be home to them again. Wasn't. Not for two years. Then unexpectedly the jellyfish came back. One night the lake was emptied, the next day the lake was filled with sparkling bodies, of poisoned wires wafting in the currents of the sea. No one knew why. Now imagine it wasn't a lake at all. Imagine it was a world . . .

*(Everyone is looking up while
the NARRATOR speaks.)*

YPRIOT

Who said that?

JOHN

I have no idea.

ISABELLA

What does the book say?

JOHN

(glancing at book.)

The man hears words of an invisible narrator comparing Eryhren to a lake in a tropical forest . . .

YPRIOT

Skip ahead, please.

JOHN

The narrator provides an explanation and comparison but otherwise is completely useless and serves no other purpose in the play. Can be ignored or have his lines cut without altering the plot.

NARRATOR

Well fuck you too, I'm going home.

ISABELLA

Where do you think he went?

YPRIOT

I'm not even sure he was really here. Let's focus on those two a second and listen in.

*(Three turn to RHAELGREN and DRAJIALRA
as they start talking out loud.)*

RHAELGREN

Have you seen fires in the sky?

DRAJIALRA

Yes, an odd season of fire, an unexpected time.

RHAELGREN

It is more. I have heard that in Ulelinsinore the forests of the suicides have begun early.

DRAJIALRA

Early? But it is not yet time.

RHAELGREN

No, it is not. This worries me.

DRAJIALRA

Why does it worry you elder? Surely all this that has happened has happened many times?

*(As she speaks she removes her
fish mask to reveal the mask of
a bird, still silvery.)*

DRAJIALRA

Surely we shall become again? Surely that is our nature.

RHAELGREN

Natures change child. Have you seen Tlruiez and Inmcyl, the place of clouds and moon of ice?

DRAJIALRA

(pointing up.)

Is it not in our sky now?

RHAELGREN

It is. And it is as we have called it forever. Just as the ocean above we named Renyth. And yet something grips at me, other words. In my dreams I hear the names of places I have never seen which have never been. During the day . . . ah look! Another fire lit in the sky. During the day our words shift like water. What are you now, child, what have you now become?

DRAJIALRA

I am a skessis.

RHAELGREN

And before when the waters you swam?

DRAJIALRA

I was a h'trehm.

RHAELGREN

Yes, the names of beasts I have heard since my childhood and childhood's end. Yet when I see you now another name grips me. A bird.

DRAJIALRA

What is a bird?

RHAELGREN

It is you, child, what you are right now. A bird with wings outstretched, and before you were a fish.

DRAJIALRA

Where did such words come to you?

RHAELGREN

I do not know. Look child . . .

(He points.)

RHAELGREN

Yet another fire falling to Eryhren. We must make haste. The forest of the suicides awaits.

(They depart stage right.)

YPRIOT

The forest of the suicides. Interesting.

JOHN

I never heard their conversation before. Could see through infinite eyes but could hear nothing. Could think but the thoughts were my own, not theirs. Until now.

ISABELLA

What do we do now?

IJAAPA

(standing.)

You must come with me. The colony is ready. Our homes are made.

JOHN

Homes?

IJAAPA

Yes. Cities have been built. Mankind has taken residence here.

YPRIOT

What happened to the others?

IJAAPA

They have all been killed by now. Come, let us go, and I will show you.

BLACKOUT

Act I.

Scene 6.

Setting: A blank stage.

At Rise: They arrive on stage right to see several people clustered about. They are men and women and are clearly human, having no masks.

IJAAPA

My people.

JOHN

What happened to the others?

IJAAPA

They perished, killed by us.

YPRIOT

This seems to be the end of your dream JOHN.

JOHN

Yes, it does.

(There is a group of people. As IJAAPA walks past them though they each take out masks, those of animals, and when he completes his circuit he stands at centre stage while those he passes speaks. There is a different man, and a woman and they wear the masks RHAELGREN and DRAJIALRA wore.)

NEW RHAELGREN

My mother gave birth to me out the corner of my eye.

(IJAAPA turns to see him wearing the mask.)

NEW RHAELGREN

I perished, my body hanging from trees like tattered rags, and now this form I possess. This shape I know as mine.

(IJAAPA kneels to the ground and begins to weep.)

NEW DRAJIALRA

This skin is mine. There was the time before when my body shimmered like glass. Glass. I never knew that word before. Now I have this skin, this dominion. I have bones. I never knew what bones were.

(Stretches forth her arms.)

NEW DRAJIALRA

I could fly. But I cannot change this skin anymore.

(Next group begins to speak, all wearing same silvery beetle masks.)

TALHRENIX

My mother gave birth to me and I her third child. I have seen my brothers wearing my faces. Where they go, I will follow. My blood is their blood, my skin their skin. I am as they are. They were as I am . . .

LEHITIRA

Who are you speaking to?

TALHRENIX

(facing audience.)

I do not know.

LEHITIRA

When I am your age will I say the words you are saying now?

TALHRENIX

I do not know. Brother. . .

(Addressing another man.)

TALHRENIX

When you were my age did you say the words I am saying now?

MYREIRGN

I did. I said all this just as LEHITIRA did. And when you are older you will say these words, and another will ask the question, exactly as you asked me.

TALHRENIX

And what will I be when I am you?

MYREIRGN

You will be me, with another name. And I will be him, with another name. Though the end comes.

IJAAPA

What is happening?

YPRIOT

This is where the dream ends. Do you remember anything about what happens after it?

JOHN

No, and clearly this is not the end.

(MAHATIS comes forward wearing
the mask of a bird, but larger
than DRAJIALRA'S.)

MAHATIS

At night I could turn into a bird. I swear it. I would gain wings and soar and below me Eryhren would be, shattered

continents shifting about the core, forests upon the floating isles and floating rivers. At night I could turn into a bird. I swear it.

(He stops then.)

MAHATIS

I never knew this word before. Bird. I can count their language, each species. Raven and wasp-feather and vulture and deimos-sting. There is a language to the names of them, there is a language to wings.

IJAAPA

JOHN, what happened to you?

YPRIOT

Look, your namesake.

MAHATIS

JOHN is dead. There is no JOHN, only me. I am MAHATIS. I lived in CyIngtian and had my home beside the floating river.

TALHRENIX

My mother sang me lullabies older than the stars.

NEW DRAJIALRA

Our bodies decayed and our renewed.

IJAAPA

But we murdered you!

Asceraph

No. Look.

*(ASCERAPH and several others by
MAHATIS come forward as well as
a woman who is not wearing a mask.)*

ASCERAPH

Today strange creatures came into our midst. They wore no faces as we have, could not shed their skins or become things of flight or water. We reached out to them and they in fear . . .

*(Here the woman ANAMETHA and SYAREIGN
step forward, she with weapon drawn, he*

with his hands up.)

ASCERAPH

Attacked one of our own. Killing him.

*(He falls as she puts her weapon away
and goes to him, checking his body,
then rises suddenly as if afraid.)*

ANAMETHA

His body is melting away.

ASCERAPH

SYAREIGN he was called. First of our people killed. A word we had no knowledge of before they came. They brought with them other words. And they took our words away.

*(Other men slowly walk off stage,
going stage left, leaving ASCERAPH
behind.)*

ASCERAPH

Had they but waited . . . had they but waited . . . they would have seen our deaths written on the ground. Ours was a doomed race always. We were always on the precipice of fading away.

*(He walks away as well as
WENG PO enters stage right.)*

JOHN

Who is this?

WENG PO

This is WENG PO of the colony ship *Erlang Shun*. So far we have counted three hundred worldlets about the ocean planet. These worldlets, each possess jungles and forests. We also noted there is water here but somehow the rivers do not require contact with the ground . . .

NEW DRAJIALRA

They are floating rivers.

WENG PO

It is recommended the native fauna and flora can be serviced to our needs.

NEW DRAJIALRA

They are oceans in the sky.

WENG Po

We have designated this moon as P3K-944, and it is now the site of our new colony. Naturally, your species will have to come to an end.

NEW DRAJIALRA

Naturally.

WENG PO

Afterward we will take this as our own. Our children will be born never knowing any other sky. They will never know the river is unnatural or that it was once normal for a world to be of a single shape.

NEW DRAJIALRA

Naturally.

WENG PO

Do not mourn your deaths. It will be like falling asleep.

NEW DRAJIALRA

Naturally. As will yours.

(PO's hand reaches down and pulls out the mask of a silvery spider like the others, from his coat. He tries to resist putting it on but can't, and when it is on his face he shudders, or screams.)

WENG PO

I can see Renyth coming over the horizon now.

NEW DRAJIALRA

As can I.

WENG PO

These bodies are not like those of our history. But they will suffice.

NEW DRAJIALRA

(Indicating IJAAPA.)

This one, he is not changed.

WENG PO

One must always remain who is unchanged. It is the nature of things.

(They walk off stage left.)

JOHN

So, this is how the dream ends.

YPRIOT

Apparently.

ISABELLA

One problem though.

YPRIOT

What?

ISABELLA

Why haven't we woken up yet?

BLACKOUT
END OF ACT

Act II. Haman's Children
Scene 1.

Setting: The stage is bare except for YPRIOT, JOHN,
ISABELLA IJAAPA, WENG PO and ANAMETHA.
At Rise: Suddenly a matte drawing of a house appears.
YPRIOT walks over to it and knocks on it.

YPRIOT

Flat.

IJAAPA

*(begins speaking as chairs descend
and PO and ANAMETHA take their seats in them.)*

They built a house on the ruins of a dead city and each day what had been WENG would sit and read one of the novels he brought from the old Earth. At night they would watch floating rivers pass by like the skins of the aliens they killed. His favourite book was *Boomslang*, about a spy who lived when Earth had

nations. Boomslang was an agent provocateur who would infiltrate anything, become what he needed to be and then slip away as if he'd never been.

(WENG PO rises from his chair, book in hand, to stare out the window.)

IJAAPA

He infiltrated other nations to carry out his handler's aims until there fell the day he could not remember who he was. He stared out the window into space, reflection of himself staring back and couldn't remember anything before the false name Boomslang draped over his true name then.

WENG PO

It's gotten dark early.

ANAMETHA

With these eyes, it's hard to tell.

WENG PO

I never slept before. I never dreamed.

ANAMETHA

Nor I.

WENG PO

These creatures had strange names. This is a hand, this an eye. I can feel words crawling in my mind . . .

(He taps the side of his head.)

WENG PO

Can feel terms they used. But they are gone, never to return.

ANAMETHA

IJAAPA remains.

WENG PO

One must always remain. It is the nature of things. Just as happened to the others in turn.

JOHN

Others?

ANAMETHA

Did you hear something?

WENG PO

Yes. Is someone there? Answer me now.

*(YPRIOT steps forward from where
they are clustered near stage right.)*

YPRIOT

Yes, it is I YPRIOT, and my associates ISABELLA and JOHN.

WENG PO

You are not of us. How have you survived?

YPRIOT

I have a pretty face, and strong legs.

*(Another chair descends and
YPRIOT sits in it as JOHN and
ISABELLA come forward now.)*

YPRIOT

Now, who might you be?

WENG PO

I am Kekitaria and this is Lehitroa. We are of the people.

YPRIOT

I see. JOHN?

JOHN

Yes?

YPRIOT

What does the book say about them?

JOHN

(glancing at book.)

Those taken at death in Eryhren were restored. Those seemingly killed could not truly die. Rather their bodies blistered away, melting like crimson sand in scarlet rain, to then pour into whatever flesh took their place.

WENG PO

That is the nature of things.

YPRIOT

And you JOHN, do not remember any of this?

JOHN

I do not, no.

ANAMETHA

Why would he remember anything?

YPRIOT

He is you, my dear, that is why.

ANAMETHA

I am myself.

YPRIOT

Not completely. Nothing ever dies after all. This means the body you have has not truly lit out. She is still in there I suspect. All those words you know, they aren't just words you know.

WENG

PO You will be given new eyes, new minds.

YPRIOT

Yes, well, I like the one I have, thank you very much. Besides we aren't here to be given new minds, just an explanation for the old ones in the mad logic of a dream.

WENG PO

A dream?

JOHN

Yes. This is my dream that we are in. I came here to understand why I kept having it, night after night.

WENG PO

But this is reality. There is no dream in this.

ISABELLA

You're wrong. You're his dreams. And we have come into this

labyrinth to understand why.

ANAMETHA

They are mad.

WENG PO

No, they are possessed . . . of a certain sense. I feel it in them. But it is not possible.

*(ANAMETHA leaves stage right and
then returns, clearly pregnant.)*

ANAMETHA

Why are they still here? So much time has passed.

WENG PO

What? But you left only a second ago?

*(ANAMETHA leaves again and
returns, now no longer pregnant.)*

ANAMETHA

In time our children will be born.

ISABELLA

What is happening?

YPRIOT

It is like before with IJAAPA. Past, present and future come together here. Though, I think her dialogue needs work. Still.

(He rises.)

YPRIOT

Since you cannot give us any useful information, we should take our leave of those we love, and loved. A pleasure.

(He bows to them both.)

YPRIOT

Let us go.

(They exit stage left.)

WENG PO

What strange creatures they were.

ANAMETHA

I was with child, and then not. A new word comes to me.

WENG PO

Love?

ANAMETHA

No.

WENG PO

Sex?

ANAMETHA

No. Fuck.

WENG PO

That is the word?

ANAMETHA

Either that or I have quite forgotten it.

BLACKOUT

Act II.

Scene 2.

Setting:

An empty stage.

At Rise:

YPRIOT, ISABELLA and JOHN enter stage
right to see IJAAPA arrive stage left.
They meet in the middle.

JOHN

Where are we?

*(Matte drawing of a cave lowers, stops
halfway. YPRIOT grabs lower end of it.)*

YPRIOT

(bitterly)

Help me pull this down. Everyone helps.

(The matte comes down fully.)

YPRIOT

(deadpan.)

Aha, a cave.

IJAAPA

I am the last man in all creation now.

JOHN

Speak for yourself.

ISABELLA

I may be the last woman though.

YPRIOT

Remember, dream, not real. So, how did we get here?

IJAAPA

Walked drunkenly through streets, saw women pregnant in moments.

YPRIOT

Been there, done that . . .

IJAAPA

They gave birth to children. It seemed years passed in seconds. Children were the same, looked the same sibling to sibling. A brother looked like his brother only a year apart. A sister looked like her sister only a year or two apart.

JOHN

And now we are here, together.

VOICE

(booming)

Why have you come?

JOHN

We seek answers.

VOICE

(nicer now)

JOHN, is that you?

JOHN

Yes, it is I.

VOICE

Got no idea who you are, never heard of you.

JOHN

What!?

VOICE

I lie, I know you quite well. How are you?

YPRIOT

Who are you?

VOICE

I am that I am.

YPRIOT

You're not God, who the hell are you?

VOICE

I am G'nanyyn, one of your predecessors.

JOHN

What do you mean?

VOICE

YPRIOT, are you there?

YPRIOT

I am. I asked you who are you.

VOICE

Yes. I am a portion of Uololia Cycycisia.

YPRIOT

Helpful.

JOHN

Wait, I know that word.

VOICE

You fought there on the scarlet sand, defending the glass-cities of our kind and I fought with you. And I perished there.

ISABELLA

Your hallucination?

VOICE

Not a hallucination. A memory of a time billions of years ago. And between those two times were many dreams. We are in the language and country of dreams.

JOHN

What do you mean, the language and country?

VOICE

This is nothing more than the thoughts of some artist labouring away in a small room. And yet paradoxically it is also real, an actual place, an actual moment in time, and I walked a ground similar to where you are walking now. Or rather I walked beneath.

JOHN

Beneath what?

VOICE

The waves.

YPRIOT

The ocean planet.

VOICE

Yes, I was a titan for a time, wandering sunken cities of godlike creatures. I carved into stone the shapes of things you cannot imagine and gave birth to swarms of mist. And then I perished, coming here into the caverns with the others.

ISABELLA

Is that NARRATOR there too?

VOICE

No, he was just a cheap theatrical device.

JOHN

Can I see you?

VOICE

I have no body anymore. I am simply voice, and little else.

YPRIOT

Little does not mean nothing.

VOICE

Nothing else then.

IJAAPA

What has become of humanity?

VOICE

Is that IJAAPA?

ISABELLA

Yeah.

VOICE

Humanity has not perished and you will prove it. But you will not like it.

IJAAPA

If humanity survives, I will rejoice.

VOICE

No, no, no you really won't. Anyway, you are here to receive my words and then I will fade utterly, sleep and arrive somewhere else.

YPRIOT

Somewhere else.

VOICE

Somewhere else. I will be carried into the past or the future and I will forget, until the next time we meet, in another billion years. As for the others, they will not answer you. All others in the cavern are obsessed with the creation to come. From their points of view, all reality is a point without point and they a multitude and one simultaneously. I alone remain partially myself and only so long as I have purpose, in waiting for you. Now my purpose is done. I depart, friend to friend following, as we must.

ISABELLA

I think he's done.

VOICE

Bye.

ISABELLA

Okay, there he goes.

IJAAPA

Humanity is not truly destroyed. There is hope. Let us go from this place now.

(They exit, stage left.)

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT

Act III. The Nautilus Shell.

Scene 1.

Setting: The lights come up to reveal the matte drawing of an alien city.

At Rise: The four arrive stage right. There is a YOUNG GIRL wearing a bird's mask and a MAN by her, and the other aliens gather around. There is also a YOUNGER GIRL wearing the same mask, and a YOUNG BOY wearing the same mask as the man. WENG PO and ANAMETHA are there as well.

YPRIOT

What happened?

WENG PO

We have no words for it. He attacked her, we stopped him.

IJAAPA

He attacked her?

ANAMETHA

Yes.

WENG PO

Now there is fear their siblings will do likewise. You are human, you know these things. Explain them to us.

IJAAPA

How was she attacked?

WENG PO

We do not have the words.

*(ISABELLA goes over to the YOUNG GIRL
who is crying and bends down. She talks
to her silently and then returns.)*

ISABELLA

I have the word.

WENG PO

What is it?

ISABELLA

She was raped.

WENG PO

(pondering a moment.)

Yes, this is the word.

IJAAPA

(appearing shaken.)

Your people never did such things?

ANAMETHA

Why would we? Such words and thoughts had no place here before.

JOHN

It seems they have a place now.

IJAAPA

This is the sign that humanity is not truly lost and gone
forever? This?

WENG PO

What must we do with him, and them?

YPRIOT

Them?

WENG PO

The younger sibling is the same as he, therefore whatever is
done to one must be done to both. The girl has a sibling and now
the fear clings that what has been done to her sister will one
day be done to her. What must be done?

IJAAPA

There are prisons and punishments, and bars and walls and courts.

ANAMETHA

What do these words mean?

JOHN

They mean nothing now. This is only a dream. It should end shortly.

(Turns to go the way he came.)

WENG PO

Wait! All this is real, feels real, is real to us. You are strangers, you understand this as we do not.

JOHN

But you will, if given time. You will understand what it is to be human. You will become fully human, as if you had never been anything else.

WENG PO

We do not desire this.

JOHN

Mankind did not desire to burn. I doubt mankind desired to be turned into puppets and hollowed out by you either.

ISABELLA

JOHN, wait. What does the book say?

JOHN

I do not care anymore.

YPRIOT

(curious.)

Why?

JOHN

We came here to find the end of this dream, yet it has not ended. I am told my hallucination was real, that I fought in a time before. Well, that time is gone. Each night I dreamed of this but it will not stop. Don't you see the dream will not end

and we will just linger forever? Never dying. I have had enough.

IJAAPA

Stop!

(Everyone turns to look at him.)

IJAAPA

I do not understand what you mean by dream or not. But I do not care. The one before you is a criminal and should be punished. The girl should be tended to. His sibling should be watched but that does not mean his fate is the same as his brother's. Each has their own destiny, their own end. The future is not written in stone.

*(JOHN turns as IJAAPA
says all this.)*

IJAAPA

Mankind perished and yet lingers on. Your people perished and yet linger on. Only I remain as truly human, and as I was. But I will not be here forever. In all the waking cities of our dreams, in all the burning cities of our sleep there will come a time when all things are ended, when I am ended, and when I end nothing of me will remain except your memory of me. As for him he should be punished. Evil must be stopped or else it will always spread.

WENG PO

And what is evil?

IJAAPA

That which destroys hope. That is evil.

(JOHN turns then.)

JOHN

I said that. I said that before the battle.

IJAAPA

I know.

*(IJAAPA's demeanour changes,
becoming more assertive.)*

IJAAPA
Welcome home JOHN.

BLACKOUT
END OF ACT
Act IV. Kaizen
Scene 1.
Setting: Bare stage.
At Rise: JOHN and IJAAPA are alone.

JOHN
Who are you?

IJAAPA
I am you. As you are me.

JOHN
Where did everybody else go?

IJAAPA
They've gone to watch a performance of *Oedipus Rex*. They changed the plot slightly, but enough remains to be familiar to us. Others have gone to watch a performance of a criminal who was frozen, sentenced to five hundred years suspended between the ticking of a clock, released into an alien world, alone and terrified. Others have gone to listen to the story of a man washed up on the shores of a country of giant serpents, golden and terrible and wise beyond all reason, one of the first stories ever made by mankind. Alien arts are appreciated you know.

JOHN
Is this where we end, or where we change?

IJAAPA
Yes. This is where our fatal flaw is revealed.

JOHN
What flaw is that?

IJAAPA
Either we will die and change and become like them, or we will die and not become like them. That is our tragedy.

JOHN

I was told we would not die.

IJAAPA

YPRIOT is close to the truth, but not quite. Rather the essence remains but the memories change. These beings here were once like birds and fish and before that could have been titans, or creatures smaller than grains of sand. You have fought until you lost all memory of your country, your home, your life, and the tragedy is you do not remember your family or your time before. It has been washed out like crimson sand in scarlet rain.

JOHN

The girl, will she be alright?

IJAAPA

No, but she will survive. Her sister will not be harmed nor will the copy of the man. He was steered clear of such actions having seen them once already now with his own eyes.

JOHN

What act is left to me?

(Suddenly matte drawing of the street
Descends, ISABELLA appears. Table and
chairs descend as sound of a busy street
outside and they both take positions they
took in Act I.)

ISABELLA

I heard you had been having a rough time of it.

JOHN

Bad dreams mostly.

ISABELLA

It helps to talk it out.

JOHN

Sometimes.

(Turns to look at street behind him.)

JOHN

Do you ever grow tired of it, ISABELLA? Tired of days and

nights? Tired of the race?

ISABELLA

Sometimes. Tell me about your dreams.

*(Suddenly ISABELLA stops moving
and the sounds of traffic fade.)*

IJAAPA

This could be your fate, to move forever in the circle,
culminating with meeting me and then going through all the
motions again.

JOHN

Or else?

IJAAPA

Read the last page.

*(JOHN takes out the book,
opens it and starts reading.)*

JOHN

The man at the end was given two choices in ending things. He
could turn and circle the same plot, arrive at the same
destination and in such a way never allow humanity to die. Or
else he could succumb to the realization that in one of his
aliases he had raped, had killed, and in being given all his
memories back would suffer and perish and be broken by them.
This choice only he could make.

(YPRIOT arrives stage right.)

IJAAPA

All this is just the recollections of a tragedy. You could go
back to live it all again, be allowed another chance at the
wheel. Maybe even find another world close enough to home to . .
.

JOHN

Give me my memories now.

*(IJAAPA nods and JOHN collapses to the
ground. ISABELLA is freed to move and
rushes to him. The matte drawing disappears*

*and everything goes dark outside the four
of them clustered together on stage.)*

ISABELLA

JOHN!

*(ISABELLA cradles him as YPRIOT comes
forward and the mansion interior reappears
while the lights come up as IJAAPA exits
stage left. But not before saying . . .)*

IJAAPA

Goodbye JOHN.

*(YPRIOT kneels to where he was sitting
before as does ISABELLA and JOHN sits as
he had before too. They open their eyes.)*

JOHN

I remember now.

ISABELLA

You know who you are.

JOHN

A killer, a monster.

YPRIOT

And then you changed.

(JOHN goes to phone on a small table.)

JOHN

Hello, yes. I'd like the number of the local constabulary
please. Thank you. I'll wait.

ISABELLA

What are you doing?

JOHN

Yes, I'll give the address. What I am doing is this. I'm
changing my destiny. Yes, like to report a criminal. Yes, I can
describe him. Please come shortly. He'll be waiting right here.

YPRIOT

You are going to turn yourself in? Or are you going to kill us?

JOHN

You can see the future. You tell me.

CURTAIN

CAICETUS REX

A Play in One Act

by

cgnastrand

Cast of Characters

Caicetus	The hero
Erisia	The poet
Laurence	The mad stage manager
Aledia	The mother/wife of Caicetus
Azerith	The father of Caicetus
Jadiroa	The other mother/lover of Caicetus
Polyneux	The good leader
The Guy	The audience member
Efriog	The prophet
Sphinx	The plot device
Oracle	The other plot device
Mob	Mob
Women in Mob	Women in Mob
Man 1	Grave digger
Man 2	Grave digger
Man 3	Gold digger
SERANDU	Other father of Caicetus.

Act 1.
Scene 1.
Setting: Bare stage.
At Rise: ERISIA can be heard off stage.

ERISIA
(off stage)
Hello? Hello is anyone there? Hello . . .

*(ERISIA enters stage right, gazing
at audience, smiling broadly,
a young woman wearing a white tunic
like from ancient Greece.)*

ERISIA
Oh, there you are! Gosh there's an awful lot of you here. Oh, I
haven't introduced myself yet. My name is ERISIA and welcome to
tonight's performance of Oedipus REX, the classic terrifying
story of a man who simply couldn't see the downside of having a
hot mother until it was . . .

(She turns back to stage right.)

ERISIA
Huh? No, this is Oedipus. Oedipus. What do you mean this isn't
Oedipus? But I got dressed up and everything. Yes, I read the
script. Really. You don't say?

(Turns back to audience.)

ERISIA
Okay, tonight's performance is the story of CAICETUS REX the
terrifying story of a man who couldn't see the downside to
having a hot mother until . . . What? She turns back and walks
toward stage right. What is it now? Turns exasperated eyes to
audience, holds up a finger. One sec. Yeah? Okay. Okay. Okay.
You know I hate you now and will at the earliest opportunity use
your lower intestine to decorate my changing room. No, I don't
say that every time . . .

*(Turns from stage right looking
up then turns back.)*

Okay, I do, but still. So, what am I supposed to say because I

thought the plot kind of wrote itself . . . uhuh, uhuh . . . no shit really? Okay.

(Turns back to audience.)

ERISIA

We have some technical difficulties to iron out because apparently everyone was told it was Oedipus when in fact it is CAICETUS REX tonight. Now, we got the plot details, and the script, and the actors, but . . . well just bear with us. So, so, so, so . . .

*(Looks up for a moment
then back at audience.)*

ERISIA

Script time. Behold the story of CAICETUS REX the man who . . .

(Turns to look at stage right.)

ERISIA

Wait, just making sure you won't interrupt me this time, turns back to audience, the man who couldn't see the problem of having a hot mom until things went completely out of control, leading to me, the prophet ERISIA . . .

(Turns to stage right.)

ERISIA

One sec. Okay, I have to apologize everyone only got the script two days ago, and this is opening night, so it seems I read the wrong part. Mostly because all our parts were changed, three different times. So, I'm not the prophet ERISIA I'm the poet ERISIA and I'm here to provide commentary on the plot so the other actors can see and hear me sometimes but not other times. And without further ado CAICETUS REX!

(ERISIA exits stage left.)

ERISIA

(off stage.)

You are so dead LAURENCE for this fiasco and after I did all those kinky things with you and I'm not even the prophet . . . what they can still hear me. Fuck me. Later.

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 2.

Setting:

Empty stage.

At Rise:

A banner comes down that reads

"Palace of CAICETUS REX." CAICETUS and ALEDIA enter stage left. CAICETUS is dressed as a royal figure, ALEDIA in royal gowns. CAICETUS walks forward and bends down to pick up something and his crown falls over stage. CAICETUS looks up shocked, then recovers.)

CAICETUS

Oh, my love, even my crown departs me now.

ALEDIA

(in shocked tones.)

Oh yeah, I guess it does.

(Recovering now.)

ALEDIA

Oh, my husband, what are we to do about this plague that has afflicted the city so?

CAICETUS

Yes, right, the plague. Ah, well, it's bad and we have to do something to fix it. Got any ideas?

(LAURENCE comes onto stage.)

LAURENCE

Tony, that's not your line.

CAICETUS

I forget my line LAURENCE, sue me.

LAURENCE

Oh, I'll do that later, right now your line is the plague, the terrible ending of our beloved city-state. Pronunciate Tony, pronunciate.

CAICETUS

The plague? The, ah terrible ending of our beloved city state.

LAURENCE

Good, that's good. I'm just going to wait here to make sure you get it right.

*(CAICETUS staring in shock as
LAURENCE goes off near curtain
and stands looking at CAICETUS.)*

CAICETUS

Ah, the beloved city will perish unless the plague be stopped.

ALEDIA

Oh, my love, surely you who defeated the SPHINX will find a way.

CAICETUS

I didn't.

(LAURENCE comes forward.)

LAURENCE

That's not in the script. Do it right.

(ERISIA comes out stage right.)

LAURENCE

What are you doing?

ERISIA

Look, Tony's doing the best he can, so is Samantha, but I don't think they can do anything with these interruptions, so you know what . . .

*(ERISIA kicks LAURENCE in groin,
he doubles over in pain.)*

ERISIA

We're going in a different direction. Tony, say what's on your mind.

CAICETUS

But it's not in the script.

LAURENCE

Oh, my balls!

ERISIA

Neither is that but I bet the audience liked it. Do your best man, we'll stand with you what you try, (considering how many times we've had to keep this disaster in line.)

(Takes LAURENCE by right ear and leads him off stage right. Her can be heard.)

ERISIA

Do your best.

CAICETUS

Okay, I didn't defeat the SPHINX.

ALEDIA

You didn't?

LAURENCE

(off stage.)

That's not in the . . . Ah!

ERISIA

Quiet you. You know how good I am at stuff like this.

CAICETUS

(with growing confidence.)

I didn't. I wandered into the country of dark fields and dragon clouds, uh, I glimpsed them making war against, well against the mountain stone. I went amongst black rivers and cataracts and saw her, you know, her, the SPHINX herself. But, I didn't kill her.

ALEDIA

Well, what happened then?

CAICETUS

I told her my name and, well, she just threw herself off the cliff. So, I came home, told everyone what they wanted to hear.

ALEDIA

Still, no one else returned home alive.

(ERISIA enters stage right.)

ERISIA

My king?

CAICETUS

Yo.

ERISIA

I bring great news.

CAICETUS

The pizza arrived?

ERISIA

Not that great news, but I understand the chefs are doing the best they can. No, my liege, word has come back.

CAICETUS

Word, word, right! Mommy and Daddy.

ERISIA

That's right. Your mother and father have heard your plea and there is word they have agreed. We can move, sending our people out from ravaged Thebes to ravaged Corinth.

CAICETUS

Okay. Cool. Then we'll be ready to make everything right.

ERISIA

Yes, we will, sire.

(ERISIA and CAICETUS exit stage right, leaving ALEDIA alone. ALEDIA looks out to audience in mild shock, then shrugs and exits stage right, and as she does so she sings.)

ALEDIA

Tiptoe through the tulips, that's where I'll be, tiptoe through the tulips of love . . .

BLACKOUT

Act 1.
Scene 2.
Setting: A bare stage.
At Rise: Banner descends which reads "Palace of
Corinth." AZERITH and JADIROA enter stage
right.

AZERITH
Oh Tony, ah, I mean, CAICETUS!

*(CAICETUS enters
stage left.)*

CAICETUS
Hi Daddy.

AZERITH
Hello, my son.

JADIROA
Hey son.

CAICETUS
Hey.

AZERITH
I understand you've been to see the ORACLE of Delphi.

CAICETUS
Yes! Yep, I saw her.

AZERITH
And what did she tell you?

*(CAICETUS edges close to
JADIROA and smiles slyly.)*

CAICETUS
Hey.

JADIROA
Hey.

AZERITH
Anything to do with me?

*(CAICETUS takes off
sharp knife from belt.)*

CAICETUS

Ah, no.

AZERITH

You don't seem well my boy, what is the matter?

CAICETUS

Can I talk to you privately Daddy? I'll see Mommy when she
fucks, ah, I mean, tucks me in bed tonight.

*(JADIROA smiles slyly, shrugs
and then exits stage left.)*

AZERITH

Certainly, my boy, how can I help?

CAICETUS

The ORACLE said I was going to kill you and mommy-fuck mommy. I
don't believe it, but . . .

AZERITH

But prophecies worry you.

CAICETUS

Well duh.

AZERITH

My boy, when I was a lad your age, do you know what the ORACLE
told me?

CAICETUS

That you'd marry Mommy?

AZERITH

No, she told me I'd marry a goat. Which I did, but for an
unrelated reason. However, I learned from this that prophets and
prophecies can't make you do things you don't want to do. So, my
boy, what do you want to do with your life?

CAICETUS

I want to be a great king and meet a nice woman and have lots of

kids. And own a tank.

AZERITH

All good choices my boy. And if you stay here it could all be yours. I won't tell you what to do but prophecies can't make you do anything you don't want to do . . .

JADIROA

(off stage.)

Oh, CAICETUS, I'm waiting.

CAICETUS

Right, prophecies can't make me do anything . . . but I really, really want to! Ah . . .

*(Toying with knife in hand,
staring at AZERITH.)*

CAICETUS

I think I know what I have to do.

AZERITH

Good boy.

*(AZERITH turns back on CAICETUS
and he lifts dagger up to plunge
into AZERITH's back, AZERITH turns
back and CAICETUS hides knife behind
his back. AZERITH turns back again,
CAICETUS lifts up knife but can't
bring himself to do it.)*

AZERITH,

(still back turned.)

My boy, do you know why your mother and I are so proud of you?

CAICETUS

I'm well endowed?

AZERITH

That too, but mostly because you're an honourable, compassionate young man and we both love you.

JADIROA

(off stage.)

An awful lot!

AZERITH

So, I know you'll do the best thing. The right thing, *(turns to look at CAICETUS and hugs him,)* because you're my son.

CAICETUS

Even if I kill you and mommy-fuck, you know.

AZERITH

My boy, if murder and incest could break up a family like ours it would have been destroyed generations ago. *(Whispers in ear.)* Just don't use a knife. Poison, that's the way of kings.

CAICETUS

I know daddy, I was being a nilly-head.

*(AZERITH leaves, stage right.
CAICETUS looks at audience.)*

CAICETUS

Fuck this, I'm leaving.

JADIROA

(off stage.)

I'm in the bathtub.

CAICETUS

Ah, Rachel, I mean JADIROA, I mean Mommy, stop tempting me! It's not fair. Ah, nope I'm out.

*(CAICETUS exits stage left.
ERISIA enters stage right.)*

ERISIA

That boy is so messed up. God, I love him.

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 3.

Setting: Bare stage.

At Rise: A banner descends that reads "City Market."
POLYNEUX enters stage right, and with him is
MOB.

POLYNEUX

Oh, my people, oh my suffering sons!

MOB

Hear, hear!

WOMEN IN MOB.

Daughters too!

POLYNEUX

Yes, yes, daughters too! We have suffered greatly from the
plague and I have hope we will survive. But we must accept that
things have gone the way they've gone and that's the way things
are going to be!

(ERISIA enters stage right.)

ERISIA

(speaking to audience.)

This is POLYNEUX, CAICETUS' right hand man and overall good guy.
Swell guy. Nice guy. He is trying to explain to the people about
the plague and doing a bang-up job in the process, isn't he?
Come on, everyone, give him a hand, don't be shy. You sir, in
the second row, you sir, applaud.

GUY

Me?

ERISIA

Yeah, you. Come on.

*(MOB and POLYNEUX are
looking at ERISIA.)*

ERISIA

Hey, you're not supposed to see me, I'm doing that soliloquy
thing.

POLYNEUX

Well, it's hard to ignore you right now. But like I said, change is inevitable! And the plague, the plague . . .

*(Starts to break down
and begins to cry.)*

POLYNEUX

No matter how horrible it is we still have to go on. My own son died because of the plague . . .

(ERISIA goes over and hugs POLYNEUX.)

POLYNEUX

He was only twelve and now he's gone.

ERISIA

Oh, it's okay, it's just a play.

POLYNEUX

You know me, I like to get into character, and he was so young! I miss him.

(ERISIA staring at audience.)

ERISIA

Come on, give him a hand. You sir, guy in the second row, get up here. Tell him he's doing a good job.

*(GUY IN SECOND ROW gets up
and goes to POLYNEUX.)*

GUY

There, there, it's going to be alright.

POLYNEUX

I really miss him!

*(MOB starts crying too. GUY
puts hand on POLYNEUX's shoulder,
and then hugs him.)*

GUY

It's okay, it's just a play. No reason to be upset so much.

POLYNEUX

I know.

ERISIA

(starts crying.)

Now you've got me doing it.

(wipes back tears. GUY puts arm around ERISIA's shoulders so ERISIA, GUY and POLYNEUX are now in a line, stage left. MOB starts crying and holding back tears, then GUY grabs ERISIA's breast.)

ERISIA

(staring at GUY.)

Now you're pushing it.

GUY

Sorry, just wanted to lighten the mood.

ERISIA

Uhuh.

POLYNEUX

The plague has taken so much from us, our sons and daughters, but I have hope that CAICETUS will stir us out of this mess, and we will be saved.

ERISIA

(Looks at POLYNEUX.)

Stir?

POLYNEUX

I meant steer but I said the wrong word.

ERISIA

No, no, let's hope CAICETUS stirs us out of this mess. Someone has to.

POLYNEUX

Let us go to make preparation for our departure.

MOB

Hear, hear.

*(POLYNEUX bows to audience
and he and MOB exit stage left,
leaving ERISIA and GUY alone.)*

GUY

(looking out at audience.)

So, ah, here's my number . . .

ERISIA

Get down there you.

(GUY returns to seat.)

ERISIA

POLYNEUX and the MOB, eh, people, they'll be here all night.
Now, let's see how CAICETUS and the little miss is doing, shall
we, after this rousing endorsement of his skill.

(Enter CAICETUS and ALEDIA stage right.)

CAICETUS

I have no idea what I'm doing.

ALEDIA

Has that ever stopped you before?

CAICETUS

Once, when I was trying to get a woman's bra off, but other than
that, no.

ALEDIA

Well, the people are counting on you.

CAICETUS

I know, I know, and I can't let them down.

*(CAICETUS walks to where
ERISIA is and bumps into her.)*

ERISIA

What the hell?

CAICETUS

How strange there appears to be some invisible object in front of me.

(ERISIA steps back while CAICETUS reaches out hands, groping for it.)

CAICETUS

Nope, it's gone.

(ALEDIA mouths the words "what the hell" to ERISIA. ERISIA shrugs. CAICETUS turns back to ALEDIA who is near stage right.)

CAICETUS

You're right, I can't give up, just like I couldn't give up when I, ah, what was it, ah, yes, when I fought the SPHINX.

ALEDIA

You said she killed herself.

CAICETUS

I know, but I didn't know she was going to do that until she did it, and before then I was fearing for my life.

(ERISIA looks at CAICETUS and then rises arm behind him as if about to hit them, then shakes her head as CAICETUS turns and walks by her, accidentally stepping on her foot.)

CAICETUS

Yes, I must be a proper hero to my people.

ERISIA

And watch where you're going to.

CAICETUS

Who said that?

(CAICETUS and ALEDIA exit stage left.)

ERISIA

Well, nothing to do but . . .

POLYNEUX
(off stage.)

Wait!

ERISIA
What?

POLYNEUX
I was supposed to confront the prophet before the scene ends.

ERISIA
Oh, yeah, right, Johnny, get out here.

(EFRIOG enters stage right.)

EFRIOG
Yeah.

ERISIA
You're up.

(ERISIA exits stage left.)

LAURENCE
*(muffled voice
can be heard.)*
You're ruining everything!

*(both men turn stage right
then turn toward each other.)*

EFRIOG
So, you've come at last.

POLYNEUX
I have.

EFRIOG
Well, what do you want?

POLYNEUX
Your prophecies hurt us sir, your blind devotion to the gods who
have caused our fate.

EFRIOG

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow, wait, that's the wrong play.
Oh, here we go; what makes you think the gods don't know what
they're doing?

POLYNEUX

We both know the gods are whatever the prophets say they are.

EFRIOG

Sounds like you've got a speech prepared.

POLYNEUX

I do.

EFRIOG

Well, my leg hurts, so tell it to the air.

(EFRIOG leaves stage left.)

POLYNEUX

*(panicking, talking
to empty stage.)*

The prophets only adhere to their own divining and we poor
mortals are cast aside because of it.

*(Pause as if waiting
for EFRIOG to speak.)*

POLYNEUX

No, you're wrong EFRIOG, for the gods are not divine nor
perfect, they are only what you think they are. In truth it's as
if the gods don't even exist. And since you prophets revere the
gods it's as if . . .

EFRIOG

(off stage.)

I don't exist!

CAICETUS

*(pokes head out
stage right.)*

Who said that?

POLYNEUX

Oh, what fools we mortals be. Damn it, now you've got me doing it!

(When POLYNEUX says first line he turns to stage left, and when line ends rushes off, stage left. CAICETUS stares at audience, confused.)

CAICETUS

Ah, hi. The next scene is almost ready, we're trying to subdue LAURENCE but he's managed to chew through the ropes, so this will only take a sec.

(CAICETUS' head disappears.)

CAICETUS

(off stage.)

Where is the SPHINX?

ERISIA

(off stage.)

Better question; where is LAURENCE?

ALEDIA

(off stage.)

Fuck, LAURENCE has escaped! Stage Manager on the loose!

BLACKOUT

Act 1

Scene 4.

Setting:

Bare stage

At Rise:

Banner lowered, "ORACLE of Delphi." CAICETUS enters stage right, looking decidedly uncertain. ORACLE enters stage left, also looking uncertain. She appears to be an older woman wearing a white robe which covers most of her body except her face. The robe is long and flowing and very large.

CAICETUS

Kay, uh, I am CAICETUS, here to learn my future. What you got?

ORACLE

I see you are a great king . . .

CAICETUS

Not yet, Daddy's still alive.

ORACLE

Ruler of a great city in precipitous decline.

CAICETUS

No, our city's pretty good actually.

ORACLE

Of course, first you've got to kill your father and then like
shit the fuck out of your mother but after that the city's
yours.

CAICETUS

I think you mean fuck the shit . . .

*(CAICETUS looking
at her in shock.)*

CAICETUS

Hey, how do you know what I do in my private life?

ORACLE

It is no matter, I am a prophet, we know these things.

*(CAICETUS putting
hands behind back.)*

CAICETUS

Okay, how many fingers am I holding up.

(ORACLE puts hands behind own back.)

ORACLE

At least one more than I'm holding up right now. Look, I know
it's hard to hear you're going to be a murderer and a mommy-
fucker . . .

*(CAICETUS shrugs
at the second one.)*

ORACLE

But prophecies are always right in these stories and I'm sure it will all work out for the best . . .

*(ORACLE looks up
in the air a sec.)*

ORACLE

Okay, I'm sure you'll be known as a murderer and an incestuous bastard but these things happen. Life is incredibly random, except when the gods say something is going to happen. Then you can take it to the bank.

CAICETUS

Life is usually random?

ORACLE

Oh yeah, except in this context. You're fucking doomed.

*(LAURENCE's face peers out of
robes, his face next to hers.)*

LAURENCE

Boy are you!

*(ORACLE screams and takes off robe to
reveal LAURENCE has been hiding in it.)*

CAICETUS

LAURENCE!

LAURENCE

Haha! You thought you could tie me up but I got free! Now I'm going to have everyone do what they were supposed to and make you all do the play right!

ORACLE

Oh, I have a new prophecy, Tony, er, CAICETUS, punches out the evil demonic monster, and maybe the gods don't turn you into a murderer and an incestuous bastard.

CAICETUS

Too late on the second one, but still, here I go!

*(CAICETUS punches LAURENCE and
he falls to the ground.)*

CAICETUS

Yay, prophecies totally work. Except . . .

(He turns to look at ORACLE.)

CAICETUS

That means I will kill Daddy.

ORACLE

I just said the gods might spare you of that fate. Jeez, pay attention.

CAICETUS

But if I'm destined to punch out my boss, er, the demon, maybe I can't control my fate. I mean I already did so many things with . . .

ORACLE

Ah! I don't want to hear it. All I know is you've got a destiny kid. Make it a good one. Unless the gods say otherwise in which case, yeah, you're fucked. Buh bye.

(ORACLE exits stage left. ERISIA and POLYNEUX enter stage left and drag LAURENCE away feet first.)

ERISIA

Okay, LAURENCE has been subdued.

(Looks to CAICETUS.)

ERISIA

You look conflicted.

CAICETUS

Yeah . . .

(Stares at hand used to punch LAURENCE.)

CAICETUS

Guess I am.

JADIROA
(off stage.)
CAICETUS, I'm waiting.

CAICETUS
(brightening.)
Conflicted feelings over. Coming!

(CAICETUS exits stage right.)

ERISIA
Wow, he really is.
BLACKOUT

Act 1
Scene 5.
Setting: Bare stage.
At Rise: Banner is lowered which says "City Market."
ERISIA enters stage left.

ERISIA
Okay, so, what do I do now? Mmm, let's see, well . . .

(Looks out to audience.)

ERISIA
I'm a poet and so I'm supposed to say something poetic right now
I guess.

*(Muffled sounds of LAURENCE
can be heard off stage.)*

LAURENCE
Motherfucker.

*(ERISIA turns to stage left
then turns back to audience.)*

ERISIA
Kind of hard what with what I just saw . . .

*(Looks stage right, small muffled
sounds can heard. ERISIA turns back.)*

JADIROA

(off stage.)

Oh, Tony!

*(ERISIA turns back stage right,
then turns to audience again.)*

ERISIA

See what I mean. Anyway, we come now to the touching scene, the touching scene!

*(ERISIA turns to stage left.
Three men come forward.)*

MAN 1

Right.

MAN 2

Sorry.

MAN 3

Here we are.

MAN 1/2/3

(sing song voice.)

Three little grave robbing guys are we . . .

MAN 2

Just come back from the lavat'ry . . .

MAN 1

Waiting to say something very touching . . .

MEN 1/2/3/

At once About this horrible tragedy. Or something.

ERISIA

I give you a touching scene. I hope.

*(ERISIA exits stage right. MAN 1
takes center stage, 2 and 3 are
on either side of him.)*

MAN 1

Poor boy here taken before his time.

MAN 2

*(pointing to empty
space by his feet.)*

Look, there's his mother there.

MAN 3

And his second cousin twice removed.

MAN 1

Well, we'll have to bury them and steal their stuff . . .

MAN 2

Anything of value.

MAN 3

It's the only humane thing to do.

MAN 1

Indeed, it is for life is a walking shadow, a cruel jest that struts upon the stage, takes a giant dump of pain and heartache, and then is heard no more.

MAN 2

That was beautiful man.

MAN 3

Truly eloquent.

*(MAN 1/2/3 walk off, stage left.
ERISIA enters stage right.)*

ERISIA,

(question in her voice.)

The touching scene?

(She walks off too, stage left.)

BLACKOUT

Act 1

Scene 6.

Setting: Bare stage.

At Rise: Banner descends, reads "Gates of the City Market." Enter CAICETUS, stage right.

CAICETUS

Wow, I've made it. I've come to Thebes.

JADIROA

(off stage.)

CAICETUS, I'm waiting.

CAICETUS

I'm not talking to you, I'm in Thebes now, far away from your side, and your eyes and your lips and . . .

(ERISIA enters stage left and steers him toward centre stage.)

ERISIA

Later lover boy. You've got to save the city from the evil SPHINX.

CAICETUS

Oh, yeah, right. Where is the SPHINX?

(Banner of "Gate of City Market" is lifted up, both CAICETUS and ERISIA watching, to be replaced by "Land of the SPHINX.")

CAICETUS

Wow, that was fast.

ERISIA

Yeah, well, good luck.

(ERISIA exits stage left.)

CAICETUS

You know I figured I'd meet more people in the city, maybe hear how everyone's suffering and then I'd make some really cool speech, but I guess this works too.

*(SPHINX enters stage left, who
is a woman with big wings on and
has what look like claws for hands.)*

SPHINX

Hey.

CAICETUS

Hey.

SPHINX

So, I guess you're here to kill me, huh?

CAICETUS

Yeah, guess so.

SPHINX

Well, have to catch me first!

*(SPHINX turns to run
then trips and falls.)*

SPHINX

Ow! Help me up, please?

CAICETUS

Yeah, sure.

*(CAICETUS lifts up SPHINX. Wings
fall off. Both look down at fallen
wings and then CAICETUS looks
into SPHINX's eyes.)*

CAICETUS

Should we fight or something, right now?

SPHINX

Let me show you around first, then we'll fight an epic duel to
the death that will make you a heroic figure of myth.

CAICETUS

What if I lose?

SPHINX

I didn't say you were going to win. Come on, I know this nice

spot where we can talk and afterward visit bloody murder on each other.

CAICETUS

Ew, don't say murder.

(They exit stage left.)

CAICETUS

(off stage.)

My stabby knife is aching to be used.

SPHINX

(off stage.)

Please tell me that is actually a knife.

BLACKOUT

Act 1.

Scene 7.

Setting:

Bare stage.

At Rise:

Banner lowered that says "Palace of CAICETUS." CAICETUS and ALEDIA enter stage left, AZERITH and JADIROA stage right.

AZERITH

Hello, my boy, how goes the running of the city?

CAICETUS

We have a massive plague, people are dying and we need to move.

AZERITH

Haha! Funny stuff! Let's pitch in and help then.

(JADIROA and ALEDIA move off together near to stage left.)

JADIROA

Kisses.

(JADIROA and ALEDIA kiss briskly, then kiss each other a long time. ALEDIA stops.)

ALEDIA

Is this how you usually greet your daughter-in-law?

JADIROA

Eh, depends on how cute they are. So how is our boy doing?

ALEDIA

He's trying his best to protect the city, but it's hard. Anyone else would have given up, but he's a fighter. That son of yours never gives up.

JADIROA

I know, sometimes at night just when you're on the cusp of something and you think it's all over, but then . . . well I've said too much.

ALEDIA

And how.

AZERITH

Tell me, son, are you happy here?

CAICETUS

I was until people started dying. Then it kind of sucked.

AZERITH

Well, as your father let's fix that. I have thousands of men ready to move the city to a better location, far away from that land of the SPHINX. Did you know it seems like there's all sorts of poisonous monsters there. I'll bet dollars to donuts that's the reason people are getting sick.

CAICETUS

Ah! You're right! What she said was true!

AZERITH

Who?

CAICETUS

(says quickly.)

Ah, no one.

AZERITH

Anyway, we can have the whole population moved, no trouble.

(LAURENCE enters stage left.)

LAURENCE

Haha! It is I the prophet EFRIOG!

ALL TOGETHER

EFRIOG?!

LAURENCE

Yes, come with terrible news which will shake all of you to your foundations! CAICETUS REX is hiding a terrible secret, even from himself!

ALEDIA

What terrible secret my love?

CAICETUS

I don't know, apparently, I've done such a good job I've hidden it from myself.

EFRIOG

But I have found out!

*(LAURENCE has a rope in his hand
and pulls it forward, to reveal
the ORACLE's hands are tied up as
she is led into stage.)*

LAURENCE

I know your secret! I know your secret!

ORACLE

He's gone mad with theatre! Someone, you that guy in the second row! Help!

*(GUY gets up and rushes stage.
LAURENCE slaps him.)*

GUY

Down I go.

LAURENCE

Hahaha, I will now reveal the secret and damn you all to hell!

(ERISIA enters stage left.)

ERISIA

Ahem. Hey LAURENCE, the scene doesn't play out like this.

LAURENCE

Aw, everyone else got to try different things, my turn now. Do you know how many sleepless nights I worked on this, trying to redo Oedipus into a flawless masterpiece when it was such a soggy mess before. And I did, and even if I had everyone play different roles and had everyone learn the play in two days, even if I randomly made Tony memorize all sixty versions of my play it's still no excuse for this shoddy work. So, now we do things my way! Hahahaha.

ERISIA

Yeah, but look . . .

*(Hands him the script
in her hand.)*

ERISIA

According to this in all versions of your play the horrible secret can't be revealed until the scene where CAICETUS fights the SPHINX and that scene hasn't been shown to the audience yet. So you have to wait and then blow the whistle on everything.

LAURENCE

(crestfallen.)

Damned it, you're right. Okay, next scene everyone. Oh, and before you get any idea about kneeling me in the crotch, I've got a cup.

*(ERISIA kneels him in crotch.
He doubles over in pain.)*

ERISIA

Next time LAURENCE don't use a paper coffee cup to protect your nads.

*(Takes rope from his hand and
they rush off stage left while
CAICETUS, JADIROA, AZERITH and
ALEDIA rush off stage right.
LAURENCE doubled over in pain,
walking to stage left.)*

LAURENCE

Oh, why did I think that would work?

(He exits stage left.)

BLACKOUT

Act 1

Scene 8.

Setting: Bare stage.

At Rise: Banner, "Land of the SPHINX."

SPHINX and CAICETUS enter stage right.

SPHINX

And over here is where women made of stone dwell, I like to call them Sally.

CAICETUS

Sally, or Sallies?

SPHINX

It's hard to tell, they kind of fused together some time ago. And over here are great fields of giant mushrooms and rivers of pitch, and salad dressing. So, she turns to face him, what's on your mind?

CAICETUS

*(saying quietly
and uncertainly.)*

I'm a hero and I'm here to slay you.

SPHINX

Good! Easily said, not so easily done, but good. Everyone needs a hobby, so, why?

CAICETUS

What do you mean, why?

SPHINX

Why are you going to kill me?

CAICETUS

You're a monster and you deserve to die.

SPHINX

Oh, because I could say the same thing about you. What you've been doing . . .

CAICETUS

Hey, stop that, no one should know.

SPHINX

I'm the SPHINX baby, I can see the future.

CAICETUS

No, you . . .

SPHINX

Can't! See I totally can. I can see Marilyn Monroe blowing JFK, I can see man walking on the moon, I can even see every terrible movie ever made, which I think has slightly turned me mad. And I can see how the story ends so I know baby, I know. Now, why should I die?

CAICETUS

Because you're supposed to?

SPHINX

Good answer, hey wait a tick, you are CAICETUS, right, that CAICETUS?

CAICETUS

(says slowly.)

Yeah.

SPHINX

Yep, I totally have to die now, prophecy and the like. But I gotta warn you I'm the only thing keeping the plague from entering the city; Sally doesn't like people much and she is really good at biological warfare. So if you kill me that threatens everyone.

CAICETUS

I don't believe you.

SPHINX

Would you believe I'm actually your grandmother and your grandfather was a turnip?

CAICETUS

No.

SPHINX

How about if I was your grandmother and your father was really some guy you killed on the road.

CAICETUS

I took a boat to get here, so not that either.

SPHINX

Oh well, goodbye relatively indifferent world!

(SPHINX falls on ground.)

CAICETUS

Are you dead?

SPHINX

Yep.

CAICETUS

Well, my work is done. I wonder if Sally puts out?

(CAICETUS toward the place where Sally is then seems to get slapped across the face.)

CAICETUS

Guess not.

(Walks off stage right.)

BLACKOUT

Act 1

Scene 9.

Setting:

Bare Stage.

At Rise:

Banner, "Palace of CAICETUS."

LAURENCE, AZERITH, JADIROA, ALEDIA, CAICETUS and ERISIA have returned, all coming stage right.

LAURENCE

Okay, we good now?

ERISIA

Yep, you can proceed with your evisceration of our beloved king.

LAURENCE

Perfect, for you see CAICETUS has a terrible secret of which not even he is aware. He is destined to murder his father and fuck his mother.

CAICETUS

Been there, didn't do that.

LAURENCE

But I am not referring to AZERITH and JADIROA . . .

JADIROA

What?

LAURENCE

I am instead referring to SERANDU and his wife, ALEDIA.

CAICETUS

What are you saying?

ERISIA

Yeah, seriously, what?

LAURENCE

(giggling like an idiot.)

On the road to the city, you were stopped by a man and in a pique of anger you called him an enemy and killed him. You, born the son of SERANDU and ALEDIA, cast away to Corinth newly returned, have murdered your father and fucked your mother, there she is, *(he points to ALEDIA,)* right there!

CAICETUS

I don't understand.

ERISIA

Yeah me neither.

(Looks over script.)

ERISIA

Uhuh, uhuh, uhuh, Tony changed that, Rachel altered that there, the SPHINX did her thing differently, and since CAICETUS took a boat to get here he couldn't have killed someone on the road.

ALEDIA

SERANDU died of a heart attack while we were making love.

CAICETUS

The best way to go.

LAURENCE

No no no no no! In the play Oedipus kills his own father and marries his mother and that causes the plague. He's responsible, he's to blame for everything. It's all his fault!

AZERITH

Now wait a tick. Aren't you the writer, LAURENCE?

LAURENCE

I . . . *dabbled*, but at this point nothing has gone right.

(Points to CAICETUS.)

LAURENCE

All you had to get straight was how it was all your fault, everything, how you were told to murder your father and marry your mother, and off you go, coming here. To her. *(Pointing to ALEDIA.)* And on the way you kill SERANDU,

(SERANDU comes on stage left.)

LAURENCE

Yeah, that guy, you killed him and that was your father.

SERANDU

Hey. When was my scene?

CAICETUS

I didn't know you got a scene.

ERISIA

He didn't. In fact, SERANDU isn't featured in this play at all. Who the hell are you?

(SERANDU scratches head,
looks up in the air.)

SERANDU

You know, I don't know.

*(SERANDU fades away. Everyone
walks over to where he was, shrugs
shoulders and then goes back to
their original places in the scene.)*

LAURENCE

And now, now after being tied up by you . . .

(Pointing to ERISIA.)

LAURENCE

And watching my vision murdered and fucked by all of you, I'm
ready to tear this place apart! You've ruined everything! You've
destroyed my vision!

GUY

Now wait a second.

*(Everyone looks at him
as he comes onto the stage.)*

GUY

(speaking to LAURENCE.)

They didn't ruin anything. As I understand it you spent all this
time making it nearly impossible for them to know what's going
on. A full play in two days, different versions, all trying to
improve Oedipus. Well, what's wrong with Oedipus anyway?

LAURENCE

*(taking a deep breath, seeming
to slow down a bit.)*

Well, you know I have a certain loathing . . . for tragedy.

GUY

That's hard to tell.

LAURENCE

(taking another deep breath.)

What I mean is . . . well I always felt Oedipus was kind of

incomplete you know, and I just thought maybe, maybe if I did this people would know my name and I'd be well-liked and people would love what I did as a writer.

GUY

Well, the audience is still here, and I'm entertained.

LAURENCE

But, it's not what I wanted the way I wanted it. I wanted everything to work out perfectly and now it's all ruined.

ERISIA

It's not ruined. We're all here to confront the prophet, CAICETUS has been told a terrible secret but that doesn't have to end him.

CAICETUS

Yeah, I mean I know killing a father is terrible but I can get past that.

LAURENCE

And fucking your mother.

JADIROA

Lucky girl.

*(everyone looks to
JADIROA weirdly.)*

AZERITH

The point is, it's not really CAICETUS' fault or yours. Sometimes things get out of hand.

*(Goes over and puts arm
around LAURENCE's shoulder.)*

AZERITH

Look man you've done really well under the circumstances and you should be proud of that.

LAURENCE

I should?

AZERITH

Of course, you should. Now why don't we do the scene with the

prophet where he is denounced for causing this mess and then I take him to the land of the SPHINX to be punished? Wouldn't that be fun?

LAURENCE

Yeah, I guess, but if you do the scene then I just end up in some terrible place alone and miserable.

AZERITH

Oh, LAURENCE, you're already there! Look.

(Everyone looks up as banner is changed from "Palace of CAICETUS" to "Land of the SPHINX.")

AZERITH

See we already did the scene and now we're here for you to get punished for leading my boy astray.

LAURENCE

(speaking warmly.)

You're a true friend.

AZERITH

Look, Sally. Come on over . . .

(Both men walk to blank space and then bend down and it seems both men are slapped.)

AZERITH

Wow, she really doesn't like us. But I know what to do LAURENCE. Now, you sit here and talk to Sally and we'll keep the rest of the play going without you, okay?

LAURENCE

Okay.

(LAURENCE sits on stage and seems to be talking to Sally quietly. AZERITH goes over to rest of actors.)

AZERITH

LAURENCE is subdued. So, where do we go from here?

(Everyone looks up in air a moment.)

GUY

Well, I have an idea.

BLACKOUT

Act 1

Scene 10.

Setting: Barren stage.

At Rise: Banner "City Market." CAICETUS enters stage right. LAURENCE is still talking to no one in a corner of the stage, near stage left. ALEDIA enters stage left.

CAICETUS

Lo, like I have returned, the SPHINX is dead.

ALEDIA

(weakly.)

Yay. Now we can get on with our lives.

*(CAICETUS looking down
at floor a second.)*

CAICETUS

Yes, it was a massive battle, but I won.

ALEDIA

Super. I'm ALEDIA.

CAICETUS

I'm Tony, er, CAICETUS.

(ERISIA enters stage right.)

ERISIA

And I'm ERISIA. Hey, you two make a good couple, you should get married and settle down.

CAICETUS/ALEDIA

(flat tone.)

Yay.

(both exit stage left, leaving ERISIA)

on stage, looking into audience.)

ERISIA

Like that?

GUY

(back in seat.)

Yeah, like that.

(ERISIA looks up, banner is changing to "Palace of CAICETUS." AZERITH and JADIROA enter stage right, CAICETUS and ALEDIA stage left.)

AZERITH

Alright, everything is in readiness, the people are safe and ready to go.

CAICETUS

Wow, that was fast.

(AZERITH and JADIROA exit stage right.)

ALEDIA

So, you're really my son.

CAICETUS

You're really my mother.

(Both look at ground a second then back to each other.)

ALEDIA

So, does your father swing, or . . .

CAICETUS

Mmm, maybe, there was this goat . . .

JADIROA

CAICETUS, I'm waiting.

CAICETUS

Coming Mother! Where do we go from here? I mean I was told I was going to do all kinds of horrible things and only half of them happened?

*(ALEDIA puts arms on his shoulder
while she is behind him.)*

ALEDIA

I guess the only thing that matters is if you love me.

CAICETUS

I guess I do, I guess I feel like I have all my life.

ALEDIA

Well, you can't do much better than that.

(Both begin to walk off stage right.)

ALEDIA

But seriously, your father has an open relationship right,
because he is one handsome man.

CAICETUS

Oh, you really are my mother! I'm glad we met.

(ERISIA enters stage left.)

ERISIA

Thus ends our tale of woe and incest, but not murder. So, two
out of three ain't bad. Oh, anyone have any closing thoughts or
ideas?

LAURENCE

Add more nudity!

ERISIA

Quiet you. Anyone else?

GUY

You want to get coffee sometime?

ERISIA

Quiet you. Okay, I guess that's it, the tale of CAICETUS REX. I
hope you all had a nice time, clean up after yourselves and
whatever you do don't try to put on a production in two days.

*(Looking to LAURENCE as he
starts laughing uncontrollably.)*

ERISIA

It never ends well. Goodnight and godspeed. And if there's a moral to be gained in all this, don't fuck your in-laws no matter how cute they are. Bye!

*(ERISIA exits stage right,
leaving LAURENCE on stage.)*

LAURENCE

What, I'm all alone? Hey . . .

*(He stands up and starts
running for stage right.)*

LAURENCE

Wait for me! I got all kinds of other ideas. We could redo Hamlet or make Macbeth II, Still Angry.

LAURENCE

(off stage.)

Guys?

ALL TOGETHER

(off stage.)

Get him!

LAURENCE

Ah!

CAICETUS

Wow, I guess we got a murder in too.

ERISIA

That's theatre for you Tony. It's the best job on Earth, bar none.

CURTAIN

MY HOMELAND IN
LIGHT AND DARK

A Play in Three Acts

by

cgnastrand

Cast of Characters

Alexiaries Typhon	An older man
Kaliya Bhusundra	Woman in green
Chelemma Sirin	Woman in white
Agal (Agaliarept Elelogap)	Woman in blue
Afrid Meirgann,	Woman in black
Emnriada Yaoluoge Dunmohe	Woman in grey
Agaonis Trillianire	Man in brown suit
Oenthali	Woman in red
Bhramari Karkadann	Man in grey
Mirceleon Shahmaran	Woman in silver
Narrator	Narrator

Scene

A nicely furnished
Room, and the worlds
at the end of time

Time

1929, and the year
one hundred billion

Act I.

Scene 1.

Setting:

A white room, with arched extravagant windows along back wall (three windows extend to floor.) Stage right has several bookcases with leatherbound volumes. Stage left has a massive door, arched, oaken. At centre stage is a table and several chairs. By bookcase another chair, by the door another bookcase in the corner. Chair is black by bookcase, white by the door. The table is ornate with grey tablecloth and around it are several beautifully made chairs. Seated in chairs are cast who appear to be asleep. In order TYPHON, seated in black chair, KALIYA in white, CHELEMMA closest to TYPHON, followed by AGAL, MEIRGANN, DUNMOHE, TRILLIANIRE and OENTHALI. TYPHON, balding man in late fifties, in a brown suit. KALIYA, woman in her twenties wearing a metallic green almost birdlike dress. CHELEMMA, young woman in twenties in white dress. AGAL, young woman in plain blue dress. MEIRGANN, woman, early thirties, with a bob for dark her hair, wearing a black suit. DUNMOHE closest to KALIYA, wearing a grey dress, also birdlike with feathers. TRILLIANIRE and OENTHALI facing from the audience, TRILLIANIRE close to CHELEMMA, OENTHALI close to DUNHOME. They are wearing a brown-grey suit and a red dress. Slowly they all start to stir, as if awakening.

At Rise:

NARRATOR

The last man on the last day of the Earth sat in a room.

(sound of knocking is heard.)

NARRATOR

There was a knock at the door.

(TYPHON and the others are speaking now but it's voice over, heard for the audience.)

TYPHON

(off stage.)

They were screaming . . .

CHELEMMMA . . .

(off stage.)

I remember flying, fell serpentlike, a scorpion cut my foot . .
.

KALIYA

(off stage.)

The sky was red and the trees were black . . .

MEIRGANN

(off stage.)

My hands were pierced of thorns . . .

AGAL

(off stage.)

I am the sea and the light pours off my back and the sun roars
in my face . . .

DUNMOHE

(off stage.)

My hand was a pane of yellow glass . . .

TRILLIANIRE

(off stage.)

We swam the stars . . .

OENTHALI

(off stage.)

what was my name?

(KALIYA stands, staggers up groggily
and moves toward the door as others
continue to stir. The door is opened
and in walks Bhramari Karkadann and
MIRCELEON Shahmaran. A young man in
his early twenties he is wearing a
deeply grey almost black suit and
she is wearing a silver dress, almost
like serpent scales.)

KALIYA

Do I know you?

KARKADANN

I barely know myself.

(They enter the room as AGAL
rises up and moves toward them.)

AGAL

Hello. Have we met before?

KARKADANN

Perhaps. I can't really tell. Isn't that the strangest thing?

(TYPHON has also risen up and moves
toward them. He extends a hand
awkwardly to KARKADANN. KARKADANN
takes it and then both men linger,
not certain what to do next.)

TYPHON

I'm . . . I don't really know. Still holding hands.

MIRCELEON

Perhaps you should introduce us. Someone might know who they
are.

*(TYPHON releases his hand
from KARKADANN and they move
about the table.)*

TYPHON

Do you know who you are? Do you? Do you?

*(Each person shakes his or her
head, no. During this time AGAL
has moved amongst the tables,
looking at what is on them. She
picks up cups of tea, smelling them,
picks up plates then moves to
bookcases. AGAL takes down a book
and seems to be reading.)*

KALIYA

I don't think we have enough chairs for all of you.

MIRCELEON

That's alright. We can stand.

KARKADANN

I don't remember ever sitting anyway.

*(OENTHALI has stirred and seems
fully awake. She gets up and stretches,
then pauses and looks at her hands.)*

OENTHALI

What are these?

AGAL

(off-handedly.)

Hands.

OENTHALI

Hands.

*(says the word very slowly,
as if tasting the word.)*

OENTHALI

I don't remember ever having a hand before, and now I have two.
Isn't that marvellous?

KALIYA

Does anyone remember anything important about themselves?

(TRILLIANIRE stands up.)

TRILLIANIRE

I remember . . . you.

*(points to KALIYA then walks to
her. He kisses her, his hands
intertwined into her own. Then
he pulls back.)*

TRILLIANIRE

It's not right. You aren't you anymore.

KALIYA

I don't remember ever being anyone else.

AGAL

(off-handedly.)

Does anyone know the year?

TYPHON

1929. Wait, how did I know that?

AGAL

These books are nice. I can read them easily but don't remember ever learning to read.

(TYPHON moves over to AGAL.)

TYPHON

Wait, I remember the year. It's 1929. How do I know that?

AGAL

Better question. Whose home is this?

*(AGAL moves over to windows
and looks out.)*

AGAL

I don't think it's my home. It's . . . too confining. It doesn't taste right here. So who's home is it?

CHELEMMA

There has to be some pictures around . . .

*(Is still sitting down but now
CHELEMMA rises and goes to AGAL.)*

CHELEMMA

I'm sure if we find the pictures we'll find the man. Or the woman.

AGAL

Everyone, look around.

OENTHALI

Are there other rooms?

AGAL

By the bookcase, there's another door.

*(OENTHALI goes to the bookcase
and seems to pass through it.
TYPHON is still by AGAL all this
time, uncertain what to do.)*

TYPHON

How . . . how did I know the year?

AGAL

Same reason I know how to read. The memories aren't gone,
they're just submerged under the surface of the skin of the
waters. Why did I say that? Water. Water. It's important to me.

*(OENTHALI returns with several
pictures and puts them on table.)*

OENTHALI

Oh, look, it's you.

*(Glances to TYPHON and TYPHON
walks over and looks at them.)*

TYPHON

It's me.

KARKADANN

So, this is your home then?

TYPHON

It must be.

*(TRILLIANIRE moves over and
goes past the bookcase.)*

TRILLIANIRE

(off stage)

If there are pictures there has to be other identifying marks.
Other signs. Your bedroom is unusually large. Any pictures of
the rest of us?

OENTHALI

Yeah, but it's outside.

TYPHON

Outside . . .

(He starts breathing hard.)

TYPHON

Outside . . .

(KARKADANN grabs him by the shoulder
as he's about to fall as does CHELEMMMA,
and he is speaking very rapidly.

TYPHON

I was outside and the smell of a corpse burnt the air and the
ground breathed and the wind howled, and I looked inside, I
looked into the room I had come from and they were there. And
they were screaming.

*(TYPHON collapses to ground, the
others move him to KALIYA's chair.)*

TYPHON

(whispering.)

They were screaming.

(AGAL goes over to him.)

AGAL

Who was screaming?

TYPHON

There were black bodies embedded in the walls and I had put them
there. I know I had. Writhing bodies, jaws clicking, eyes
glimmering in the dark like jewels . . . oh god, what is
happening to me?

(TRILLIANIRE returns.)

TRILLIANIRE

I couldn't find anything.

AGAL

I think we found something though.

*(TYPHON begins rocking
back and forth.)*

AGAL

I think we found something very important now.

BLACKOUT

Act I.

Scene 2.

Setting: Same room but outside is dark.

At Rise: Most of the others are gone, leaving
KALIYA, TYPHON, AGAL and OENTHALI behind
in room. CHELEMMA enters from oaken door.

AGAL

So, what's it like . . .

*(She glances to TYPHON carefully
who is still in the chair.)*

AGAL

There.

CHELEMMA

Streets are empty. Cars aren't moving. Met a few people on the
way up here. They don't know who they are either.

AGAL

Thank you.

CHELEMMA

I needed to get out of here awhile. How are the others?

OENTHALI

(in black chair.)

Everyone else is asleep. We're the only people awake in the
entire world.

CHELEMMA

That could actually be true.

(AGAL all this time is beside TYPHON

*who hasn't really moved but is just
rocking back and forth. CHELEMMMA
bends down to the look at him.)*

CHELEMMMA

How is our patient?

AGAL

Still catatonic.

CHELEMMMA

Do you think . . .?

(CHELEMMMA glances up at AGAL.)

AGAL

That he killed a bunch of people?

CHELEMMMA

Yeah.

AGAL

I don't know.

*(AGAL goes over to the table and
sits at a chair opposite the
audience. CHELEMMMA follows. OENTHALI
gets up and moves to them too.)*

AGAL

Did you check if you had a purse?

CHELEMMMA

Hours ago. Couldn't find it.

AGAL

Couldn't find mine either. Can't make sense of any of this.

OENTHALI

What time is it?

AGAL

Has to be nighttime.

OENTHALI

What hour is it?

AGAL

No clocks here.

CHELEMMA

Saw a clock tower when I left. Said 3.55.

AGAL

3.55?

CHELEMMA

Yeah.

AGAL

But it was night when you left.

CHELEMMA

So?

AGAL

That doesn't make sense. It can't have been 3.55 when you left because when you left it was dark out.

CHELEMMA

Well, how many hours was I gone?

(AGAL looks over to CHELEMMA and looks up, almost as if counting, then gives up.)

AGAL

I don't really know.

(OENTHALI reaches for a cup of tea and drinks it.)

OENTHALI

Hmmm, hot.

AGAL

What did you say?

OENTHALI

I said the tea is hot.

*(Taken aback AGAL reaches for
a cup of tea and drinks it.)*

AGAL

She's right. It's hot.

CHELEMMMA

So?

AGAL

By now it would have to be cold. Hours have passed. I don't know how many.

*(AGAL stands up and moves to the
windows and just stares up a time.)*

AGAL

The stars aren't moving.

CHELEMMMA

Well, no one notices the stars move.

AGAL

I used to. I used to sit and watch the stars walk the sky, I'd spend a thousand nights . . . just watching.

(AGAL turns back.)

AGAL

I remember that, lying on my back on a sea of stone, watching the stars walk by.

*(Turns to look at
the stars again.)*

AGAL

But the stars aren't moving anymore. They're all fixed in the summer sky.

OENTHALI

Do you remember anything?

CHELEMMMA

Just wings just sometimes. But it's slowly coming back to me.
You?

OENTHALI

Hands. I remember hands.

CHELEMMMA

Your hands?

OENTHALI

Other hands. Being touched, collected up, embraced, had a
billion lovers who never knew my face, had a billion lovers who
never knew my voice or the sound of my breathing or the colour
of my skin or the shadow-glancing of my eyes . . .

AGAL

Shadow-glancing?

OENTHALI

I think that's the right word, yes.

*(Suddenly the windows brighten
and it is morning.)*

AGAL

A whole night passed.

*(Then just as suddenly it
is dark again. Then light.)*

AGAL

What is going on?

*(Then it is night again.
Everyone waits a few minutes,
awkwardly looking outside, but
it continues to be night and
then they continue talking.)*

TYPHON

*(speaking quietly
as if alone.)*

I had a family once.

(AGAL walks over to him.)

AGAL

Tell me about them.

TYPHON

I had a lover, he loved me, and we had a family together, there in the dark.

AGAL

He?

TYPHON

Yes. He shimmered in the sun. I remember him.

AGAL

What was his name?

TYPHON

I don't know. I've forgotten names. Just remember the surface of things now.

*(AGAL bending down looking
closely into TYPHON's eyes.)*

AGAL

What did he look like?

TYPHON

He glittered when he walked. Sparkled in the sun. Jaws clicked like razors chipping stone. His eyes were jewel-eyes. His wings were ice-veined.

*(At the word wings CHELEMMMA
gets up and also walks to him.)*

CHELEMMMA

Wings?

TYPHON

Oh yes. He had wings.

CHELEMMMA

*(speaking as if from
far away.)*

I remember flying. I remember touching the wind with my

fingertips and sailing. Air brushed my face and I had a tail.

OENTHALI

Tail?

CHELEMMMA

I had a scorpion's tail, the bright bulb of a flower growing from me, the bright flower bulb becoming, the stem of a scorpion's tail. I had a face, and I had a body, I had the body of an owl and the face of a woman.

AGAL

And a scorpion's tail?

CHELEMMMA

(resignedly.)

And a scorpion's tail.

*(TRILLIANIRE enters from
the door by the bookcase.)*

TRILLIANIRE

Couldn't sleep?

AGAL

Just piecing things together.

TRILLIANIRE

I know the feeling. Spent forever on that bed of yours trying to piece together who I am.

OENTHALI

And who are you then?

TRILLIANIRE

I think I'm a god.

AGAL

Well, that makes you about the right company then. Have a seat. Have a drink. The tea's still warm.

BLACKOUT

Act I.

Scene 3.

Setting: The same room.

At Rise: Everyone is gathered around the table except AGAL and TYPHON. TYPHON is standing by the window staring out, AGAL beside him. Black and white leather chairs have moved to where table is as well.

KALIYA

So, we're all in agreement we just wait here?

MEIRGANN

Not sure what else to do.

KARKADANN

Well, I for one have no where else to go.

MIRCELEON

Neither do I.

DUNMOHE

But how are we going to find out who we are if we just sit here and do nothing?

AGAL

We're not. Last . . . I want to say night but that's not really true, a few of us got some memories back.

*(TYPHON glanced up to AGAL
then quickly looks away ashamed.)*

AGAL

We can't do anything until we know who we are.

*(Walks toward the table
where everyone is.)*

AGAL

So, that has to be the first step.

KARKADANN

But, how?

AGAL

What do we know? We know time is out of joint. I can't tell if we've been here a day or a century. I know the year but not the date. We know food doesn't seem to spoil and hot water doesn't cool. A few of us have described being . . . other things. Now, what does all this mean?

MEIRGANN

That we're hallucinating, of course. None of this is real. It can't have been days because otherwise we'd be starving. The sun can't rise and set in minutes. Time can't be out of joint. It's all in our heads.

(AGAL snaps her fingers.)

AGAL

All in our heads. An excellent point. But all of us having the same hallucination?

MEIRGANN

Well, how do I know you're real? This could all be my hallucination, my delusion. Nothing could exist apart from me.

MIRCELEON

Or me?

KALIYA

Or me?

AGAL

That's the problem with not knowing the true nature of reality. Even if it's not real you won't know, so it wraps round to being reality again. You could indeed be hallucinating alone in a room or someone else we can't even see. All of creation could be an invisible empire, unseen, unglimped, unknown. But if you can't perceive, it doesn't matter if it's real or not. It's just a thought.

MEIRGANN

Just a thought?

OENTHALI

There's no such thing as just a thought. A thought exists in tandem with other thoughts. We're not an island, we're a continent.

(Everyone looks to OENTHALI then.)

KARKADANN

We?

OENTHALI

Did I say we?

KARKADANN

Yes, you did.

OENTHALI

Well, I meant . . . no I meant we.

(Everyone is quiet for a few minutes, as if quietly in thought, or meditation. Then AGAL speaks, ignoring OENTHALI.)

AGAL

We have to begin this logically.

TRILLIANIRE

How?

AGAL

I got some paper and a pen. I've been writing down what people have said. Now, he said he saw black bodies embedded in the walls, indicating TYPHON, and he mentioned wings. So did you. You mentioned lovers . . .

(Indicating OENTHALI.)

AGAL

And I mentioned stars.

OENTHALI

To be exact, you mentioned lying on a sea of stone looking up at the stars.

AGAL

You're right. And he mentioned ice-veined wings and you mentioned having the body of an owl.

CHELEMMMA

It's delusional.

AGAL

But is it true? When you close your eyes do you remember having the body of an owl, having a woman's face, having a scorpion's tail?

CHELEMMMA

(closing her eyes.)

Each time I close my eyes.

AGAL

Okay, that's progress. We're getting somewhere.

DUNMOHE

How?

AGAL

Well, why do we think it's delusional? I mean we can't remember anything. So, everything's possible.

DUNMOHE

But not that.

AGAL

Why not? What do you think about when you close your eyes?

(DUNMOHE glancing at her hand.)

DUNMOHE

*(speaking slowly as
if hypnotized.)*

I remember a yellow pane of glass, only the glass curled and twisted and I looked out and could see vast fields . . . all of topaz, all moving, all writhing.

(DUNMOHE looks up to AGAL.)

DUNMOHE

And it was my skin. All of it my skin and flesh moving beneath a pale white sun, without heat or warmth or light. I think I was blind, but I couldn't be blind because I could see my hand. But I could see it from every angle, as if I didn't have one pair of eyes, but a billion.

*(She stops, shakes
herself as if waking up.)*

DUNMOHE

It's delusional. MEIRGANN's right. Someone's hallucinating.

*(Everyone stops to look
at DUNMOHE.)*

AGAL

What did you just say?

DUNMOHE

I said she's right. Someone's hallucinating.

AGAL

No, you said MEIRGANN.

MEIRGANN

I heard you say my name.

DUNMOHE

No, no you're wrong.

*(Then she stops and thinks
it over slowly as comprehension
dawns upon her face.)*

DUNMOHE

No, no you're right. I said your name. You're AFRID MEIRGANN.
AFRID, ADFRID, we used to talk you and I, that's why . . .

*(DUNMOHE struggles
a moment.)*

AGAL

That's why what?

DUNMOHE

That's why we came together.

(She stands then.)

DUNMOHE

And you. I know you.

AGAL

Who am I?

DUNMOHE

You are AGALIAREPT ELELOGAP.

AGAL

And who is yourself?

DUNMOHE

We are EMNRIADA YAOLUOGE DUNMOHE. God, how do I know that?

CHELEMMMA

What kind of names are that? I would think we'd be called something else.

MEIRGANN

We.

CHELEMMMA

Is anyone listening to me?

KALIYA

I'm listening.

TYPHON

(as if from far away.)

I'm listening . . .

AGAL We.

*(AGAL moves away from the
others back to bookcase. Not
looking at them she speaks.)*

AGAL

You said we. But you meant I.

DUNMOHE

Yes. No. Yes. So?

AGAL

I remember the feel of alien skin against my own. Of great
tendrils whipping at my flesh. Pale luminescent rounded bodies

ringed of infinite obsidian eyes. Parasites in the blood. In my blood. In the body of what I was.

(She looks back.)

AGAL

It's slowly coming back to us.

MEIRGANN

Us.

CHELEMMMA

I am one person. I'm not a multitude. I'm not a legion.

TYPHON

(as if from far away.)

Neither am I.

*(KALIYA starts looking
at her hand.)*

KALIYA

This isn't my hand, my hand can become a wing, or a tendril or a blade of grass.

*(KALIYA looks up
to everyone.)*

KALIYA

This isn't my hand.

MEIRGANN

Hands and eyes. We had hands and eyes. These aren't right. I can't see. I feel blind.

TYPHON

Stop!!

(Everyone looks to him.)

TYPHON

I don't want to remember who I was. I just want to be in this moment now. I don't care about wings or tendrils or blades of grass or yellow panes of glass or where the sky was red and the trees were black. I don't care about hands pierced of thorns or

when we swam the stars. I just want to be the man I am.

(AGAL walks over to him.)

AGAL

You remember a country where the sky was red and the trees were black?

TYPHON

I don't want to think about it.

CHELEMMA

We have names. I have a name. What is my name?

KALIYA

What is mine?

(TYPHON closing his eyes tightly.)

TYPHON

You are CHELEMMA SIRIN, and you are KALIYA BHUSUNDRA. You are named after a crow that survived the birth and death of uncounted worlds.

KALIYA

I am a crow?

TYPHON

Named after the raven who survived the flood of oblivion which swept creation away.

*(He breaks down a moment, crying
then goes to the corner and sits
on the floor, weeping.)*

TYPHON

(looks to AGAL.)

What is happening to us? Why is this happening to us? What is going on?

AGAL

We're one step closer now.

(She kneels down.)

AGAL

I promise we'll figure this out.

TYPHON

I just want to forget.

AGAL

Time has no meaning here. I promise if we figure this out. It's likely, if you just wait, you'll forget anyway. You can be the man you want to be right now again.

TYPHON

(repeating again and
again quietly.)

Time has no meaning here, time has no meaning here, time has no meaning here . . .

(AGAL moves to the others.)

AGAL

We have some names. We have a start. Let's try to end this. Let's try to understand who we are.

BLACKOUT

Act 1

Scene 4.

Setting: The same room.

At Rise: MEIRGANN is standing before them,
facing the audience, just behind the table.
Her eyes are closed. Her body is illuminated
while the rest of the room is dark.

MEIRGANN

I remember my body was emerald, breathing emerald, and each part of my body was myself. I could pour myself into the smallest leaf, or breathe outward and encompass a continent. And then suddenly I was given hands and eyes, and skin and touch and the memory of all these things clung to me. And I imagined my hands were pierced of thorns.

*(Then the lights go out. When they
come back on DUNMOHE is speaking.)*

DUNMOHE

My body was a pane of yellow glass. I encompassed continents of myself. I swam through the crystalline veins of my own body. I stalked the memory of the stars.

*(Then the lights go out. When they
come back on OENTHALI is speaking.)*

OENTHALI

I had a billion lovers who never knew the touch of my skin or of my body or of my name. Who never shook hands nor caressed in my embrace some lingering softness. I simply became in their presence and ended in their absence. I was the mask I wore. The mask still itches across my face.

*(Then the lights go out. When they
come back on Chelmma is speaking.)*

CHELEMMMA

I swam seas of air, I had the body of an owl, a woman's face, the bright bulb of a scorpion's tail. I crossed all lands, all waters, all skies forever. Swarmed of millions like myself, sisters who all had my face and I who had the face of all my sisters there. All smiles bright as a scorpion's sting.

*(Then the lights go out. When they
come back on AGAL is speaking.)*

AGAL

It is all coming back to us. The seconds are congealing together, fusing like burnt glass into an incoherent whole. I remember my body softly rocking to itself, asleep, awake, asleep, as if I were always dreaming and yet as if even in the country of my dreams I was awake. These bodies we wear, these skins are not enough, they are not who we are.

(The lights slowly come up on everyone.)

AGAL

We have been taken from ourselves and placed into lives not our own. I remember now one thing more.

*(She turns to KALIYA
and TRILLIANIRE.)*

AGAL

I remember that you two are responsible for our plight.

*(Without warning TYPHON rises
and attacks TRILLIANIRE as the
others hold him back.)*

TYPHON

(screaming.)

It's your fault! You did this to all of us! To me!

AGAL

Hold him! Hold TYPHON back before he destroys everything . . .

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT

Act II.

Scene 1.

Setting:

Darkness.

At Rise:

The unseen NARRATOR speaks.

NARRATOR

The last man in the world sat in a world. There was a knock at the door.

*(The lights go up to reveal the
entire cast as before, gathered
about the room in their same
positions as in Act I. Scene 1.
KARKADANN and MIRCELEON are at door.)*

KARKADANN

We'll be heading out now John.

(TYPHON/John looks up and smiles.)

TYPHON

Of course. Say hello to Mother for me.

KARKADANN

Of course. Mother will be glad . . . would have been glad I was able to see you. Though not under these circumstances. Let's go Samantha.

MIRCELEON/Samantha
Bye all. She smiles weakly and they exit the door.

(AGAL looks up as the door closes.)

AGAL
Your brother and his wife seemed nice.

TYPHON
They're good people, Rebecca. I'm glad you all came.

TRILLIANIRE
Couldn't miss out old bean. Not when we all heard the news.

MEIRGANN
Peter, have you seen my purse?

TRILLIANIRE/Peter
No.

(He reaches into his coat.)

TRILLIANIRE/Peter
Can't find my wallet.

*(AGAL gets up from her chair
and goes toward the window.)*

AGAL
Beautiful day. Lucinda?

KALIYA/Lucinda
(glancing up.)
Yes?

AGAL
How is your play going?

KALIYA
Slowly. *Oedipus Rex* is taking its time. You know how it is.
You've written stories.

AGAL
A lifetime ago. That part of my life is over now.

*(TYPHON stands up and walks over
to AGAL and then puts his hand
in her own.)*

TYPHON

I'm glad you all came.

AGAL

Wouldn't miss it.

TRILLIANIRE

Does anyone have the time?

CHELEMMMA

Sorry, no. Odd. I can't find my watch.

TRILLIANIRE

Well, it's always the last place anyone thinks to look. So, look
there first and it's bound to be there.

CHELEMMMA

What you said made absolutely no sense.

TRILLIANIRE

Just distracted my dear is all.

*(As TRILLIANIRE says this he
is looking at TYPHON and AGAL.)*

CHELEMMMA

I know.

TYPHON

Well . . .

(Turning to the others.)

TYPHON

Let's not let sadness cloud our souls tonight.

AGAL

(smiling.)

You've quoted one of my poems.

TYPHON

(turning back to her.)

I do read my dear, especially if it's important to me.

*(TYPHON turns back
to the others.)*

TYPHON

Tonight is a night to celebrate those we've lost, and those we're going to lose. I'm proud to consider all of you my friends.

TRILLIANIRE

Do you remember back at Verdun . . . ?

TYPHON

I remember.

TRILLIANIRE

(continuing.)

You and I and your brother taking on that gun-nest. Whole world seemed made of barbed wire and you said, and I remember this clearly, you said as long as we were together bullets couldn't touch us. Fire couldn't reach us. Death couldn't find us.

*(TRILLIANIRE stands up and then
goes to TYPHON and puts his hand
on TYPHON's left shoulder.)*

TRILLIANIRE

Wish we were still there. You had a way of making us believe what you said.

TYPHON

I have no regrets Peter.

(TYPHON glances back to AGAL.)

TYPHON

Not anymore.

*(TYPHON starts to stagger as others
are suffering from something too.)*

TYPHON

Strange, does anyone hear music?

CHELEMMA

Yeah, I hear something. Something singing.

*(She gets up and
goes to the window.)*

CHELEMMA

All the people are staggering about drunk. Ah, what is . . .
what happened to my hands? These aren't hands these are wings,
my god why do I have wings?

MEIRGANN

My skin feels like bark, ah! It hurts!

KALIYA

I can slip through keyholes, I . . . no. Help me, I'm melting!
Ah!

*(KALIYA recoils back and spasms,
as do the others. TRILLIANIRE
struggles as he forcefully returns
to his chair, as does AGAL. TYPHON
is the last one, moving back toward
the black chair.)*

TYPHON

I hear wasps sing. I . . . oh god, oh god, oh god they are
screaming, they are screaming . . . they are screaming.

CHELEMMA

I remember flying.

KALIYA

The sky was red and the trees were black.

MEIRGANN

My hands were pierced of thorns.

AGAL

I am the sea and the light pours off my back and the sun roars
in my face.

DUNMOHE

My hand was a pane of yellow glass.

TRILLIANIRE

We swam the stars.

OENTHALI

What was my name?

*(TYPHON begins to shake, as
if about to fall asleep.)*

TYPHON

(whispering, mechanically.)

I remember the corpse breathing, breathing, breathing. I stepped across the continent of another being's skin.

(He collapses.)

BLACKOUT

Act II.

Scene 2.

Setting: The environment is barren and scarlet. It is an open plain of scarlet and the sky is gold tinged. In the distance the matte drawing of several islands of black trees.

At Rise As curtain rises a trope of people enter stage left. There are as many of these actors as there are of the cast, minus four. They are all wearing grey-silvery garments, faces covered in mirror smooth masks, featureless. Enter stage right KARKADANN, MIRCELEON, KALIYA and TRILLIANIRE.

TRILLIANIRE

Have all preparations been made?

KARKADANN

Almost.

*(The actors by stage left begin
moving mechanically around each
other, moving their arms about, etc.)*

MIRCELEON

I think I'll miss this most.

TRILLIANIRE

Yes, I suppose we all will in time.

KARKADANN

We will occupy their bodies and their minds. We will bleed into them MIRCELEON. For a time we will become them.

MIRCELEON

I know. But is there no other way?

KALIYA

None that can be achieved in the time we have.

*(She turns to look at
the matte sky.)*

KALIYA

Look at that. Already it's starting to go away. Can you see?

KARKADANN

No, I'm afraid I can't. I'm not Mhasoba-Xelhuan like yourself.

KALIYA

No, of course. But I can see the galaxies stumble away . . .
receding. The stars are dying now.

TRILLIANIRE

I think I will become a bird one last time. I think I will
become a serpent's tooth.

MIRCELEON

My people are serpents. They blister upon the ground. You won't
be missing much by becoming us.

TRILLIANIRE

Have you ever wished to be something else, MIRCELEON?

MIRCELEON

Yes, all my life I have wished to be something else.

TRILLIANIRE

What?

MIRCELEON

(looks directly at him.)

Happy.

TRILLIANIRE

Ah, the age-old dilemma of the unsatisfied life. Well, you won't get many more chances to do what you intend, child.

KARKAKANN

Are the triskalians ready?

TRILLIANIRE

The parasites in our blood are ready. They will accompany us, bear witness for us, and slowly restore us before the end of time.

KARKADANN

Good.

*(KARKADANN turns and stretches
out his hand to TRILLIANIRE but
TRILLIANIRE doesn't take it.)*

TRILLIANIRE

I'm sorry we are too different. I don't know how to reach out to you. A moment . . . He stands tall a moment, suspended and then turns back to KARKADANN.

KARKADANN

You look just like me now.

(KALIYA does likewise.)

MIRCELEON

And you look just like me.

KALIYA

I've never had scales before. How do you move without legs or arms?

MIRCELEON

You get used to it over time. The body obeys the mind, if you have the will.

*(TRILLIANIRE reaches out his
hand now and the two shake.)*

TRILLIANIRE

Feels strange, your skin rough like stone. How do you know which
arm to use?

KARKADANN

It's always the first third of the first three pairs on your
body. Beyond that you choose yourself.

TRILLIANIRE

Well, then I choose to go back to what I was, become a bird a
time, float the air and watch the scarlet country burn.

*(They all turn back
the way they came.)*

TRILLIANIRE

It's a shame, isn't it?

KALIYA

Shame?

*(They are on the edge
of the stage now.)*

TRILLIANIRE

We will not see humanity as it is taken away. Just switch roles
and never even know who they were. Who we've become.

KALIYA

There is no other way.

*(They exit the stage.
It goes dark.)*

BLACKOUT

Act II.

Scene 3.

Setting:

The scarlet world, or rather a small portion
of it. Stage right features the scarlet
world, then the colours run as so; green
malachite, wine dark violet, white, blue,

gold, grey and black.
At Rise: The matte drawing shows these colours, with
jungle for green, desert for gold, etc. And
before each one a person appears but they
cannot be properly seen, they are hidden in
shadow. And they are speaking to each other
quietly.

NARRATOR

Worlds were scattered across fields of stars. Xelhua, a scarlet
tear of wine canals and isles of black forest, Ishthallumia of
the greensward, where golden-limbed insects walked like synapses
across the world's wide thoughts, and Syairciega the wine dark
world that seemed as a dying man breathing in his decay.
Sped onward went Erawan of the frozen plains and pale-blue seas.
Onward came the oceans of Phyrus and the crystal continents of
Kamadhenu and the fields of Irenii where the Suparna wheel
forever, with their faces those of women, their bodies those of
owls. And lastly came Triskalios, country of the newly dead.
All these, of shadow and air and earth and stone, of wind and
light, from all these arose new flesh, new life. A menagerie
emerged. And all turned their hungry eyes to Earth. To consume
the skins of men and women and become them for a season. Then
came and uprose the swarm of themselves. Then came and uprose
the war of themselves. Then came and they fled into the dark,
themselves. Leaving mankind to linger in the darkness they left
behind. But only for a season and a time.

BLACKOUT
END OF ACT

Act III.
Scene 1.

Setting: The matte drawing now shows a sky dark wine
violet.
At Rise: TYPHON is walking across stage right to
left, alone.

TYPHON

The world seems dead. I can hear her breathing though,
continents of lungs working, savouring each last breath. In
catacomb-veins of herself I have gone, leaving them behind.

*(TYPHON turns to look
at the matte drawing now.)*

TYPHON

That sky. Soon that sky will be gone and we will leave it all behind. And mankind will stand where I stand now and I will stand where a man once stood. I will live and he will live in the place where I once stood. Strange to imagine. Shifting our roles.

*(He glances at his hand,
his body a moment.)*

TYPHON

I won't have this body anymore. Have to make do without wings. Won't even remember this time now. It will all come through like a dream. I will become someone else. I will become a new woman if that shape is mine to take.

(CHELEMMA arrives stage right.)

CHELEMMA

Are you ready?

TYPHON

I am. You?

CHELEMMA

It is time for the end of things.

TYPHON

Yes. It is time for the end of things.

BLACKOUT

Act III.

Scene 2.

Setting:

The room is empty. Doors open and everyone comes in and take their seats as before, all except for KARKADANN and MIRCELEON who stand between the table and KALIYA's chair.

CHELEMMA

(turning to TYPHON.)

So, how long have you . . . been given?

TYPHON

A year if I'm very fortunate. I suspect less than a year.

AGAL

We've been looking for certain treatments but . . .

KARKADANN

Does Mother know yet?

TYPHON

Yes, I informed her. She was worried you and I wouldn't speak to each other before the end.

KARKADANN

Is that what this is about? You making certain to say goodbye to everyone who matters?

TYPHON

Yes.

(During all this they don't move from their chairs. Once or twice TRILLIANIRE tries to get up but seemingly can't.)

KALIYA

What do you think will await you . . . ?

TYPHON

On the other side?

KALIYA

Yeah.

TYPHON

Odd you ask that. It was the strangest thing. After I got the news, don't ask me how, don't remember the walk, went down to the museum and sat awhile looking at fossils. I even saw this replica of something I called a salt-breather.

TRILLIANIRE

Salt-breather?

TYPHON

You'd be amazed what nature can produce in time. So, there I was staring at this thing, halfway between a flower made of glass

and a jellyfish, just this tiny thing amplified to let a man take a good look at it, and I felt so terribly small right then, knowing this thing and I arrived at the same place. Petrified, left like an insect in amber. The same life as mine. I suppose that's what death is really. Preserving something at the moment of its end.

KALIYA

But, after the end?

AGAL

Perhaps we shouldn't talk about this . . .

TYPHON

No, it's alright my dear. After death, I don't think anything will happen to me. But you will go on, and you, and you my dear, and our child.

KARKADANN

Child?

AGAL

I only found out a week before.

TYPHON

I think that's the only thing to greet me on the other side of death, child. Knowledge that somehow, someone will go on. Beyond that not really sure it matters what happens to me.

KALIYA

So, no hell then, no heaven?

*(TYPHON tries to get up,
struggles and then sits down.)*

TYPHON

My dear, hell was a field in Verdun and heaven the same place. It's all a matter of perspective whatever good place a man might end up in.

TRILLIANIRE

Well said, old friend. And congratulations to you, my dear. You know as soon as the tyke is born we'll be with you the whole way. Help you anyway we can.

AGAL

That's sweet. Thank you.

CHELEMMMA

So, what do we know now?

TYPHON

How has everyone's day been?

TRILLIANIRE

Better than most I guess. Turns to TYPHON. Worse than others.

MEIRGANN

Anyone hear a buzzing in the air?

OENTHALI

Yeah, what is that sound . . .?

BLACKOUT

Act III.

Scene 3.

Setting:

Same room.

At Rise:

They are in the middle of a fight,
TYPHON being pulled off by the others as
suddenly he stops. They all stop and he
seems to calm down.

TYPHON

I don't understand. How did you do all this, why!?

TRILLIANIRE

How would I know? I can't . . . remember.

*(Slowly it seems more is coming back
to TRILLIANIRE as suddenly KALIYA
goes to the window, and looks outside.)*

KALIYA

Something's happening. Look!

(Everyone goes over to look out.)

AGAL

The sky is changing. It's become dark, it's turning violet.

TYPHON

The world seems dead to me. I can hear her breathing though, continents of lungs working, savouring each last breath. In the veins of herself I have gone. Soon the sky will be gone and we will leave it all behind. We will leave it all behind so we can say goodbye.

*(TYPHON turns in synchronicity
with the others, standing beside
TRILLIANIRE.)*

TYPHON

I remember now. I remember everything.

*(TYPHON goes to the table and
takes a cup of tea. The others
move about him, watching him.)*

TYPHON

Tea's still hot because time isn't moving forward anymore. Not until we're done.

MEIRGANN

And what exactly are we doing?

TYPHON

We're standing out of their way while they get a chance to say goodbye. Far in a future time, far beyond anything humanity can understand now, far in that age we were born. I can see my world now, a vast creature, a plant breathing in and out slowly, and we had cities, did you know we had cities underneath her skin? And she was born of woman, descendent of some woman who lingered here. All of us are the product of humanity. All of us emerged from the human race.

AGAL

Yes, I remember it now. I'm an ocean, my body is an ocean but far back into our past I came. From these cities, this very room. He was here,

*(She reaches and
touches her stomach.)*

AGAL

He lived here and I came from him. All of us.

MEIRGANN

I am a jungle with amber for blood. I too came from this very room.

KALIYA

I have no shape, I can become anything I wish. We could slip our genders to anything we wished. I could become a multitude of one.

TRILLIANIRE

We drew them up, all those billions, we put them in our bodies at time's end, where the galaxies have slipped away unseen. We summoned them to bear witness to the end.

OENTHALI

And have in us another witness then. Parasites in our blood recording all we did.

TYPHON

How did we forget?

AGAL

Travelling across time unravelled us.

TYPHON

But it's all coming back. I was a wasp. I buried ants in the walls of living cities. They were screaming as they died. But it was the nature of things. I am suspended between two lives, his and mine. I feel him. He is dying. I know it now.

TRILLIANIRE

Soon we will have to return. Clocks are preparing to tick, all the billions from each corner of time are about to return from their chance to say goodbye.

TYPHON

I don't want to go.

(Everyone looks to TYPHON then.)

TYPHON

I don't want to go. I want to stay.

AGAL

I don't think you can.

TYPHON

He's dying but he has my body in that future time. He will live, and I will die. But I will die like this.

AGAL

You've forgotten what you were like, who you used to be. And how could you deny the man a chance to know his child?

TYPHON

He would only have a few months to share with his flesh and blood.

(AGAL puts her hand on
TYPHON's left shoulder.)

AGAL

Even having a day together is more important than having a lifetime apart. It's time. We have to go shortly. Clocks are starting to tick again. Time is starting to move with the weight of herself.

TYPHON

(resignedly.)

I'm ready then.

OENTHALI

You know I never realized until now what I am.

MEIRGANN

What are you?

OENTHALI

Living information. In my former life I was a book.

*(The sun rises and suddenly
everyone pauses, frozen a moment,
and then everyone seems to come
back to themselves.)*

TYPHON/John

What are we all doing here?

AGAL

I don't know. I can't remember.

MEIRGANN

It was a late night. I should be going home.

KARKADANN

I thought we already left.

MIRCELEON

Guess we came back. It must have been for something important.

*(TRILLIANIRE puts his hand
on TYPHON's shoulder.)*

TRILLIANIRE

If you need anything just ask.

TYPHON

I will.

*(TRILLIANIRE reaches
for his jaw.)*

TYPHON

What's wrong?

TRILLIANIRE

Feels sore, like I got punched in a fight.

TYPHON

Well don't look at me.

*(They all turn to
the sun rising.)*

TYPHON

I love you too much in this life.

TRILLIANIRE

And the next old bean. You love me just as much in the next.

(The lights go out.)

NARRATOR

The last man in the world sat in a room. There was a knock at the door. He opened the door and welcomed the stranger in. Then they sat down and were together.

CURTAIN